

EDITED BY MARGUERITE JOHNSON



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CLASSICAL RECEPTION DOWN UNDER

Edited by
Marguerite Johnson

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INTRODUCTION

Marguerite Johnson

A colleague once attended a conference ‘overseas’ (as some Antipodeans would say) and was asked how he coped with the absence of culture in Australasia. He explained, with tongue in cheek, that barbeques help while away the hours, as do trips to remote libraries, and the occasional visit to art galleries when the buses are running. This story, while fascinating on several levels, speaks to the contested definition of culture. What exactly does culture mean? Who defines culture? Who owns culture? Why don’t we pluralize culture more often? Implicit in this story is the equation of culture with European and British traditions. Antipodean folk know that narrative well. We can spin a cultural yarn referencing artistic masterpieces and Renaissance drama from ‘overseas’, from other cultures, from other peoples, and we can appropriate them to augment our own cultural capital.

While Australia and New Zealand are distinct countries separated by the Tasman Sea, by some 2,000 kilometres of water, we share two of the terms used in the title of this collection: ‘Antipodean’ and ‘Down Under’. Both terms speak to issues around culture, reflecting assumptions underpinning the anecdote above; namely, that we are removed from culture and civilization¹ because of geography. As embedded in the word ‘antipodes’, meaning ‘diametrically opposite’ geographically, but also in casual parlance as a broad population (and cultural) descriptor, we walk ‘with [our] feet opposite’ (Plato, *Timaeus* 63a; Aristotle, *On the Heavens* 308a). In classical Greek, ἀντίποδες denoted the opposite ends of the globe in a relative sense; that is, one who is standing at a particular spot at a particular time is at the opposite end of the earth to another (with feet in the opposite direction). While classical writers did not usually ponder the existence of antipodean people (*pace* Pliny, *Natural History* 2.65), they fantasized about people at the ends of the globe, including the inverted-footed Antipods of India, a materialization of Plato’s ἀντίποδες (Pliny, *Natural History* 7.11), and the Blemmyae of Libya, who had their faces on their chests (Herodotus, *The Histories* 4.191; Pliny, *Natural History* 7.23). Early Church Fathers rejected notions that the Southern Hemisphere either existed or, if it did, could be occupied by humans (Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes* 3.24; St Augustine, *City of God* 16.9). Cartographers, explorers and scholars of the Early Modern European age also doubted the habitation of the Antipodes. Their uncertainty materialized in tales of the Southern Hemisphere, and a string of questions:

The antipodes generate disorientation about location (where are they?), habitation (who lives there? what is our relation to them? what relation do they have to Christ’s sacrifice?), and interaction (can we ever reach there or not and come back?).

Goldie 2011: 18

Antipodean Antiquities

A more scientific approach to the 'Southern Land' conundrum emerged in the late fifteenth century, which heralded the age of exploration, and culminated in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. During these 300 or so years, anxieties surrounding 'where are the Antipodes' and 'who lives there' were replaced by plans of how to get there and stake a claim. Flint (1984: 66) comments on these changing attitudes: "Science" seems to be on the verge of banishing the last lingering traces of medieval, and, by the same token, superstitious, ideas about the Antipodes.' Ferdinand Magellan took up the challenge of 'discovery' and captained an expedition to the East Indies, resulting in both the location of a south-west passage into the Pacific in 1520, and Juan Sebastián Elcano's first navigation of the globe. Expeditions following the Portuguese foray into the straits of South America are too numerous to occupy us here; suffice to say that from the time of Magellan's voyage until the 'discovery' of New Zealand by Abel Tasman in 1642, and James Cook's navigation and mapping of it in 1769, the once imaginary Antipodes began to take form, moulded and shaped by the Europeans and British. While the first European landing in Australia was by Dutch navigator Willem Janszoon in 1606, the most famous and irreversible 'discovery' of the land then known as New Holland was Cook's charting of its east coast in 1770. Cook's subsequent recommendation of the colonization at Botany Bay changed the course of empire and – as with the incursion into New Zealand – devastated the lives and cultures of the original owners.²

Once an imaginary place, a blank space on maps, the materialization of the Antipodes called for the 'void' – the absence of 'culture' – to be filled with imperial institutions, memories and stories. And in the process of filling the 'vacuum' with 'civilization', Classics was exported to the Antipodes. In the early years of these outposts 'down under', published reports of the Antipodes were enhanced with classical flourishes; artists interpreted the bush as a Mediterranean arcadia or English countryside; poets eulogized the scenery with songs overburdened with classical imagery. As the colonies began to develop, Greek, Latin and Ancient History were taught to boys in fledgling schools, and newspapers included reviews of Greek tragedies and comedies. The debt to Classicism was endemic as colonists sought to 'civilize' the newly 'discovered' lands through established imperial models. The legacy of this is evident in public buildings throughout Australasia, carved in sandstone with eclectic architectural styles.

But the classical refrain began long before. Leading members of the imperial movement were familiar with the Greek and Roman canon as well as the classically-inspired works of later writers, from which they found inspiration and instruction in the development and maintenance of colony and empire. The aphorism from the *Emerald Tablet* – 'as above, so below' (see Luck 2006: 446) – is a useful paradigm for the importation of the ancient Mediterranean into the even more ancient lands of the South. The maxim captures the dual process at the core of Antipodean Classical Reception Studies: the symbiotic action of a subject nation's gaze 'upwards' in mimetic response to the imperial gaze 'downwards'. In the hermetic system, the aphorism alludes to the microcosm becoming the macrocosm (and vice-versa) in the accomplishment of the 'One Thing'. Thereby, the Classical Tradition that tumbled down onto colonial New Zealand and

Australia – much like the image on the cover of this book – was part of the making of a secular version of the mystical ‘One Thing.’ The analogy employed is not static because of its originary nature, for the gaze ‘upwards’ is unstable and variable, matching the ‘downward’ gaze, but also reinterpreting and sometimes challenging it.

Considering the colonial origins of white Australia and New Zealand, and the colonialism that has defined this history of these two nations, it may seem ironic that a group of white Antipodean scholars have written a book on Classical Reception Studies ‘Down Under.’ Have we reinforced a parochialism that is regularly cited as an example of our cultural cringe?³ Have we participated in the tradition of the estrangement of Australasian scholarship, which Irina Grigorescu Pana defines as the ‘Tomis complex’?⁴ Most likely we are guilty on both counts, yet I would argue that Classical Reception Studies goes a significant way in countering some of the signs of cultural cringe. This is because Classical Reception Studies is a global discipline. It intersects with methodologies and theoretical positions to embrace literature, the arts, and popular cultures. This interdisciplinary bedrock of Classical Reception extends to scholarship on all facets of traditional and new classical enquiry, ranging from studies in literature, through to enquiries into race, gender and sexualities. And, as mentioned previously, the antipodean gaze looks ‘up above,’ not only to mimic inherited traditions, but also to test them through discussion and interrogation. In this context, and germane to this collection, the discipline as it currently stands addresses the history of the imperial processes of looking ‘down under’ and matches it with an outward, upward gaze that both recognizes and challenges it with an equally compelling series of responses. In this sense, we recognize ‘being necessarily opposite and sometimes opposed to’ non-insular land-masses’ while at the same time standing beside them as a potential source of disruption (Goldie 2011: 2; Sedgwick 2003: 8–9). For example, as collective Antipodeans – white scholars both privileged and compromised by the lands we live in – we acknowledge Deep Time.⁵ As the intellectual progeny of a systematic, ruthless programme of colonialism that began in New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific regions in the seventeenth century, and which has continued in various forms, we also see the ancient Mediterranean through the Deep Time of the original owners, as much as our own individual and collective histories permit us. This is a way of not only gazing ‘upwards’ but also ‘inwards’ as we vie with competing cultural discourses that have been exported ‘down under.’ This is to recognize the ethical complexities underlying Aboriginal or Māori art galleries housed in neo-classical buildings, cultures supplanted by other cultures, and cultures that have done the supplanting. This is to recognize multicultural spaces that are constantly moving and redefining themselves. This is to recognize the imperial origins of Classics in the colonies of Australia and New Zealand and to reconcile it with our scholarship. As Lorna Hardwick (2004: 219) writes on Greek drama and (anti-)colonialism: ‘[c]olonialism almost always operates with the complicity or active participation of elites among the colonized, and the continuing role of these after independence raises special problems.’ Similarly, Ika Willis (2007: 331) has challenged Classics and indeed, the (particularly western) world with the idea of ‘the literal (material-political) survival of the Roman Empire into the late twentieth century’. In turn, this collection challenges Willis by

extending her date for the survival of the Roman Empire and suggesting that its shadows continue to be cast.

The book's structure is a traditional one based on chronology, topic/medium/genre. This is a convenient means of presenting the chapters in a coherent manner and providing a sense of the origins, changes and shifts in the appropriation of Classics over some 200 years. But this is a drop in the Pacific Ocean that calls for more work to be done, as we have made gaps as well as contributions. Arguably the most important contribution is to the established collection of scholarship on Classics and imperialism, and Classics and post-colonialism.⁶ The biggest gap is the limited attention to indigenous reworkings of classical materials, and the absence of indigenous scholarship.⁷

Our historical range is from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries. In Part I: The Colonial Past – Classical Influences in White Australasia, I discuss representations of Aboriginal and Māori peoples in several publications based on the original journals of explorers, naval captains and crew members who travelled to, and occupied, Australia and New Zealand in the eighteenth century. In 'Black Out: Classicizing Indigeneity in Australia and New Zealand', I continue my work on the complexities of invasion and British attempts to interpret Aboriginal Australians and Māori through a classical lens to communicate the events 'down under' back in the 'mother country'. I endeavour to build on the work of scholars such as Mark Bradley (2010), Noah Heringman (2013), and John Levi Barnard (2017), as well as the groundbreaking work of Australian art critic and cultural historian, Bernard Smith.

Rachael White's chapter, 'Australia as Underworld: Convict Classics in the Nineteenth Century', examines representations of Australia as a convict hellhole. White discusses early literary tropes of 'the imperial destiny of a young nation' (Dixon 1986: 3), then traces how hope fades and narratives of desperation, desolation and decay set in, manifesting in descriptions of the colony as an underworld. In addition to showing convicts as human beings, not as a nameless mass, White displays the increased use of archival research in Classical Reception Studies and, like the chapter that follows, demonstrates the increasing need to access diaries, letters, memoirs, historical records and newspaper entries to facilitate new research in Classical Reception. In giving individual convicts a voice, White also champions the literature of the non-elite or, more appropriately, the utterly disempowered; those men (in this case) whose access to the Classics and their ability to re-envision it has, until now, remained silent.

In Part II: Theatre – Then and Now, Laura Ginters, in 'Agamemnon Comes to the Antipodes: The Origins of Student Drama at the University of Sydney', explores a mystery: is there truth behind the student legend that the *Agamemnon* was the first play performed by the Sydney University Dramatic Society way back in 1889? This is solved via a circuitous path involving other mysteries and revelations. The chapter demonstrates how Classical Reception Studies provides fresh commentary on cultural institutions, including education, class, politics, gender, sexuality, taste, empire and the cultural cringe. Ginters also discusses less expected cultural strains at play: anti-authoritarianism and anti-intellectualism. Ginters' detective work also reveals some fascinating additional information, including the fact that the first Australian Prime Minister, Edmund Barton,

a Classics student at the University of Sydney, played the role of Oronte in Molière's *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* in 1868, part of a double bill with Terence's *Phormio*; and that the performance was in honour of Prince Alfred, who was later shot and injured during a picnic at Clontarf Beach in Sydney by one Henry O'Farrell.

Moving to New Zealand and the involvement of universities with productions of Greek tragedies, John Davidson traverses some 100-plus years to discuss student theatre at Victoria University of Wellington under the auspices of his colleague, Phillip Mann between 1970 and 1998. In 'Salamis and Gallipoli: The Campaigns of Phillip Mann', Davidson discusses the practice-based research of Mann during and after his time as Professor of Drama, including his professional production of the *Bacchae* (1970). Davidson also explores Mann's experimental, interdisciplinary and multilingual productions of the *Persae* (1997) and *The Trojan Women* (1997). The (predominantly white) Australasian cultural fixation with the Gallipoli Campaign (1915–16) and the role of the Anzacs (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps)⁸ are at the centre of Mann's re-envisioning of the *Persae* in his play, *They Shall Not Grow Old*. Davidson analyses the text and the production (which he saw) from a comparative angle, discussing the campaign of Xerxes in 480 BC alongside the Gallipoli Campaign. Mann's theatre has not been the subject of scholarship and Davidson's chapter goes some way in bringing it to our attention. He also discusses Mann's science fiction, especially the tetralogy, *A Land Fit for Heroes* (1993–96), imbued with the Classics. Again, Davidson introduces a topic warranting further enquiry, rightly commenting that the work has 'rather mysteriously flown under the critical radar' (p.68).

My co-authored chapter with Michael Ewans on Wesley Enoch's *Black Medea* demonstrates our shared research interests in Classical Reception. The chapter reflects Ewans' academic career as a translator and director of Greek plays, almost always with an eye to experimental reception, and my own projects on Australasian receptions of indigeneity. We acknowledge earlier work on the history of the productions of Greek dramas in colonial and post-colonial contexts, including John Dillon and Stephen Wilmer's *Rebel Women* (2005) and Barbara Goff and Michael Simpson's *Black Aegean* (2007). We also consider lesser-known works in Classical Reception Studies, such as Rena Fraden's *Imagining Medea* (2001), and Kevin J. Wetmore's edited collection, *Black Medea* (2013).

As a Classicist, director, playwright and actor, Jane Montgomery Griffiths has led the charge in bringing imaginative and, at times, divisive classical reworkings to the Australian stage (*Sappho . . . in 9 fragments* in 2010 and *Antigone by Sophocles: Adapted by Jane Montgomery Griffiths* in 2015). The last chapter in Part II, Griffiths' 'What Women Critics Know that Men Don't' is, like theatre, 'not polite'. Herein Griffiths discusses her *Antigone*, staged for Melbourne's Malthouse Theatre, the critics' responses, her replies, their replies and the resultant maelstrom. Griffiths' riposte is stridently feminist as she interrogates online reviews, blogs, trolling, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, all of which she sees as 'a fascinating new energy in Reception Studies' (p.93). Along the way, she teases out the significance of the upper-case, proper noun 'Reception' as something personal to practitioners and scholars (or both) and its relationship to the equally personal lower-case 'reception' as something that characterizes our responses to a work of Reception.

Antipodean Antiquities

In Part III: Poetry and Classical Echoes in New Zealand, Geoff Miles analyses the work of James Baxter (1926–72). In ‘James K. Baxter and the Gorgon Moon’, Miles discusses Baxter’s engagement with classical imagery, myths and stories throughout his career. In addition to providing a close reading of several of Baxter’s best-known poems on classical themes, Miles contextualizes him as the product of a colonial education based on the English public school system with its emphasis on Latin and Greek. As Ginters discusses in Chapter 3, Sydney University privileged an education in Classics from its earliest days and, so too, did each of New Zealand’s foundational universities. While not a gifted language student, as attested by his contemporary, Alistair Campbell, Baxter’s exposure to, and love of, classical literature are deeply pervasive throughout some of his major creative works. Miles’ chapter includes newly discovered poems as well as unpublished ones. Again, the use of archival research in the field of Classical Reception Studies yields a rich harvest. Miles’ sophisticated exploration of the classically inspired symbol of the moon in Baxter’s poetry illustrates its changing uses throughout the artist’s oeuvre, plotting the poet’s shifting philosophies, beliefs and personal circumstances. It also demonstrates the hybridity of Baxter’s use of classical imagery, mixed as it sometimes is with competing myths and legends, including those from both Māori and Catholic traditions.

Anna Jackson, a colleague of Miles in English at Victoria University of Wellington, continues the classical tradition in New Zealand poetry in her own collections inspired by Catullus: *Catullus for Children* (2004) and *I, Clodia, and Other Portraits* (2014). In ‘Clodia Through the Looking Glass’, we again see practice-based research in Classical Reception Studies and a chapter, like Griffiths’ contribution, written by a practitioner. Such reflections by artists on their own works are particularly brave and provide insights – not only into the creative practice, but also for future research in the discipline. Unlike the brooding, intensely self-reflexive and, at times, defensive adherence to what Baxter (and some of his critics) saw as his need to hold on to a European (classical) tradition, Jackson’s poetry is free of the tensions that sometimes belie the nostalgic use of classicism by poets. This chapter, on *I, Clodia*, is a generous exegesis on the writing process of a poet who constructs the persona of *her* Clodia as both imagined reader of the original poems of Catullus *and* imagined responder to them. This approach augments a new poetic identification with a classical icon traditionally relegated to the position of addressee and, by way of Classical Reception, is closer to Griffiths’ chapter on female/feminist/practitioner riposte than it first seems.

Part IV: Fictionalizing Antipodean Antiquities has four chapters on the works of both Australian and New Zealand novelists. Nicolas Liney’s chapter, ‘*Parilia Poscor*: David Malouf Remembers the Parilia (*Fasti* 4.721ff.)’ opens with a quotation from Proust on the chasms between worlds and the imaginative processes we employ to bridge the gaps between them. This is the process of writing Reception that Jackson discusses in the preceding chapter and, which, one may imagine, Malouf experienced as a writer of several novels on classical themes. Liney situates both Malouf and one of his main sources for *An Imaginary Life* (1978), J. G. Frazer, alongside issues embedded in the reconciliation of the British empire and its legacy with the Classical Tradition. In so

doing, he explores one of the major conflicts underlining processes of writing and reading in colonial and post-colonial settings; namely the tensions between real, unreal, intentional and unintentional participation in imperial discourses that privilege the Classics. Liney is most concerned with the treatment of the Parilia in Malouf's novel, in Frazer, and in the *Fasti*, utilizing the festival as a touchstone for his exploration of the history of comparative anthropology and its intersection with Classics at the turn of the twentieth century.

The three chapters that follow Liney's contribution deal with children's literature and young adult fiction. In 'Imaginative Displacement: Classical Reception in the Young Adult Fiction of Margaret Mahy', Elizabeth Hale prefaces her study with one of Liney's major themes: the sense of colonial displacement that surfaces in the lives and works of New Zealand and Australian writers. At the core of Mahy's response to this, suggests Hale, is a literary process of 'filling in the gaps' between colonial imaginings and everyday life with realism (New Zealand) and fantasy (classical antiquity). In her innovative scholarship on Mahy's techniques of gap-filling, Hale opens discussions of Antipodean Classical Reception as an upwards, outwards-looking process as opposed to an inward-looking self-consciousness about writing 'down under'. In this way, this chapter prompts further work on issues pertaining to the universality of Classical Reception, itself a contested area of scholarship (see McConnell 2016: 1–12) and provides a compelling paradigm: 'transnational contingency' or, reading and writing 'imaginatively across the world' (p.143). The two chapters that follow reflect the burgeoning use of classicism in children's and young adult fiction (see, for example, Maurice 2015; Marciniak 2016). Of course, in view of the cyclical nature of Classical Reception Studies, this is an example of 'eternal return', recalling the penchant for retellings of classical works for children in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for educational and moral instruction and, sometimes, for entertainment.

In 'Classical Influences in Bernard Beckett's *Genesis*, *August* and *Lullaby*', Babette Pütz matches classical intertextualities with young adult science fiction in her analysis of Bernard Beckett's *Genesis* trilogy (2006–15). Beckett's work, relatively new to scholarly enquiry has, to date, been surveyed mostly from the perspective of science fiction and young adult literary studies. Pütz expands on such approaches, combining them with close textual readings of Beckett's three dystopic novels from the perspective of Classical Reception. Her study provides a convincing analysis of the influence of Greek philosophy on the *Genesis* trilogy, particularly the Socratic method, which Beckett uses both thematically and structurally.

Anne Rogerson's chapter, 'Displaced Persons and Displaced Narratives in S. D. Gentill's *Hero Trilogy*' is a skilful, astute exploration of Gentill's themes of community, family, country, and the abandoned child in the context of white Australia's attempts at reconciliation, most poignantly around the 'Stolen Generations'.⁹ Rogerson's chapter speaks to the relevance of canonical classical literature such as the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* – Gentill's most frequent intertextual sources – as a means of exploring new environments, stories and histories. Likewise, in her discussion of the motif of travel and relocation in ancient epic, Rogerson makes connections with the Australian migrant

experience, which is underpinned by identity aligned with culture rather than place. Such carefully explored interconnections between classical intertextuality in modern young adult fiction are presented in a scholarly organic way. This is perhaps indicative of the effectiveness inherent in the use of ancient *mythos* as a didactic tool that can be, when placed in the right hands – ancient and modern, artist and scholar – discernibly non-didactic.

The significant influence of classicism on Australasian visual cultures extends back to the first years of colonization and is unequivocally the most extensive repository of Classical Reception in the Antipodes.¹⁰ In my own chapter I demonstrate the classicizing of indigeneity in the illustrations, paintings and sketches by those aboard the first fleets. And this classical turn continues to characterize the way certain Australasian artists have interpreted the histories, legends and myths of the Antipodes. Sarah Midford traces the influence of the Trojan War stories on one of Australia's greatest artists, Sidney Nolan, in 'Painting Anzacs in an Epic Landscape: Greek Myth, the Trojan War and Sidney Nolan's *Gallipoli Series*.' Nolan drew inspiration from Homeric narratives to make sense of the Gallipoli Campaign that claimed the lives of some 8,000 Anzacs. Like Rogerson's chapter, Midford explicates the essence of continuity and universality so often brought to the fore in Classical Reception scholarship. As Rogerson unearths themes of family, identity, abandonment and displacement in the works of Gentill, demonstrating that they are far from modern experiences, Midford explores the continuity of past and present – resting side-by-side – in accounts of the horrors of war. As Midford (p.183) quotes from Gilles Deleuze: 'the past and the present do not denote two successive moments, but two elements which coexist: one is the present, which does not cease to pass, and the other is the past, which does not cease to be' (1966: 59).

The Antipodean distortion of classical artwork in reimagined, reinterpreted visual spaces evident in Nolan's critique of the horrors of war is also evident in the themes underlying the printmaking of New Zealand artist, Marian Maguire. In 'Of Heroes and Humans: Marian Maguire's Colonization of Herakles' Mythical World', Melinda Johnston and Thomas Köntges reveal the overlapping of social, cultural and colonial critique that links her work with the earlier *Gallipoli series* of Nolan. Maguire is a contemporary artist, inspired by post-colonial sentiment and theory, and her prints take the viewer back to the early days of New Zealand's colonial period. As Nolan painted the Anzacs as sacrifices to a war fought on behalf of the British Empire, Maguire illustrates the Māori and New Zealand landscape as sacrifices to Herakles' colonization of Aotearoa.¹¹ While Maguire's work is whimsical at times in its recourse to classical myth and iconography, like the art of Nolan and other practitioners whose works are discussed herein, she too depicts a world of displacement, upside-downness, isolation, alienation and, ultimately, antipodal. As classical artwork clashes with mutilated bodies in Nolan's *Gallipoli Series*, images of Herakles roaming the New Zealand countryside are as bizarre and unsettling as Alice tumbling down the rabbit hole into Wonderland – an analogy employed by Jackson in Chapter 8.

In an uncanny, yet also expected sense, the consistency of sentiment, opinion, emotion and artistic imperative that underlines so many of the voices in this collection transcends both era and medium. In the final section, Part VI: Antiquity on the Australasian Screen,

each chapter discusses discrete forms of visual media: Ika Willis examines the television series *Xena: Warrior Princess*; Hannah Parry looks at Peter Jackson's blockbusters, and Leanne Glass discusses the art house film, *Penelope*.¹² Willis' 'Temporal Turbulence: Reception Studies(') Now' begins with the important and ongoing 'elephant in the room' in Reception Studies 'down under': the ethical and scholarly tensions inherent in a praxis that focuses on ancient Mediterranean discourse in colonial and post-colonial nations. Willis' suggestion in overcoming the problems (as much as they can be) is to consider a model of temporality 'sufficiently complex to account for tradition, history, and the past as multiple, contested . . . and turbulent'.¹³ This recalls Hale's suggestions of 'transnational contingency' of reading and writing 'imaginatively across the world' (p.143). The act of shedding time is to agree with Maguire's interrogation of 'the past as one huge lump' (Johnston and Köntges: p.198). Maguire's artwork explicitly processes and materializes this rejection, embracing as practice what Willis urges as theory; namely, the potential and hope offered by Classical Reception Studies to explore and analyse 'the processes by which specific pasts are remembered, evoked, and/or appropriated in specific present-day contexts' (Willis: p.212). To exemplify the possibilities unpacked in analyses that reject temporality as sequential, Willis discusses *Xena: Warrior Princess*, filmed on location in New Zealand by Pacific Renaissance Pacific. Willis explores the cult classic in terms of its use of wild anachronisms to privilege a deconstruction of the rigidities of history as we know it; suggesting along the way that, examined in terms of temporal turbulence, anachronisms – by their very nature – embrace the essence of 'the reading of all past texts'.¹⁴

Parry's chapter, 'Classical Epic in Peter Jackson's Middle-Earth Trilogies', rightly problematizes Jackson's choice of the New Zealand landscape as the setting for his epics. Continuing Willis' themes, Parry shows the limitations associated with some of the production crew's attitudes to filming in Aotearoa; for example, designer Alan Lee's description of the land as 'young . . . [but] primeval in places' (Parry: p.225) speaks to what Parry refers to as the echoing of colonial poets' often unwitting attempts at erasing Māori history by dubbing Aotearoa as a country without a past (p.225). Parry's discussion of the potential recognized in Jackson's Middle-earth films as a contender for the title of a New Zealand national epic is both fascinating and fraught; prompting the question: a national epic for *whose* New Zealand? In an analysis of the brothers, Boromir and Faramir in both text and film, Parry traces connections to Homeric and Virgilian epic to demonstrate how the classical texts inform the epic visions of both author (J. R. R. Tolkien) and filmmaker (Jackson). This is Parry gazing 'upwards' and 'outwards', like Jackson, recognizing elements of a western strain in the films. But both Parry and Jackson also gaze 'inwards', into text, film and country to warn against the inward gaze of national epic; promoting as it does a parochialism that feeds a misguided privileging of caring for one's own at the expense of others.

Finally, Leanne Glass' 'Shifting Paradigms in Ben Ferris' *Penelope*' continues her research on Ferris' first feature film, and builds on her work (Glass 2017). Glass explores the motif of dreams and dreaming in *Penelope*, exploring the filmmaker's own exploration of intertextual inspiration, mostly in the form of Homer's *Odyssey* and James Joyce's

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Ulysses. Her interest in cultural blending and the crossover between histories, past and present is demonstrated through the juxtaposition of Ferris' retelling of Penelope's story in the context of the Bosnian War (1992–95), which profoundly affected the young Australian filmmaker during his time travelling through Croatia on four separate occasions during 2003 and 2007. This is a powerful and unsettling conclusion to the volume, and arguably best represents the movement away from Antipodean lands and stories by a new generation of Australasian artists.

As our cover image shows, we engage with temporal turbulence by way of necessity – leaping backwards and forwards through time and space – jumbling about with feet inverted. This collection is testimony to this process, despite structural attempts at a conservative format to rein in the wide-ranging topics and approaches. As Willis promises in Chapter 15, temporal turbulence can bear fruit and the harvest herein is the emergence of a series of patterns in Classical Reception 'down under'. In this sense, Classical Reception Studies functions as a wonderful grid to place over the roads, byways and intersections of our collected chapters, marking points of interest, ways through and points of no return, and ultimately providing us with a map showing where we have come, and where we may go next.

PART I

THE COLONIAL PAST – CLASSICAL INFLUENCES IN WHITE AUSTRALASIA

CHAPTER 1

BLACK OUT: CLASSICIZING INDIGENEITY IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Marguerite Johnson

The colonization of both New Zealand and Australia in the 1800s was recorded in numerous publications based on the original journals of explorers, naval captains and crew members. Accounts of the voyages, the explorations of the lands of New Zealand and Australia, and the processes of colonization were accompanied by illustrations of flora, fauna and maps; in addition, descriptions of Aboriginal Australians and Māori were recorded in the fieldnotes of scientists and natural history artists who were also members of the crew. These books were popular and catered to the West's fascination with recently 'discovered' lands and peoples.

This chapter examines the illustrations in two publications and two artists' field illustrations with a methodological eye to Classical Reception Studies to consider the representations of First Australians and Māori with recourse to ancient Mediterranean sculpture. This use of classicism is evident in two engravings from the monograph of John Hunter published in 1793: the watercolour, 'A Native Wounded while asleep' (c. 1788–97) by the 'Port Jackson Painter'; and a pen and wash, 'New Zealand War Canoe bidding defiance to the Ship' (1770) by Sydney Parkinson, reproduced in the monograph by John Hawkesworth (1773).

The trend for classicism characterizing the literature, philosophy and art of the Enlightenment often produced what I term the 'black out' of indigeneity. Elsewhere (Johnson 2014), I have discussed the use of neo-classicism in colonial accounts of Aboriginal Peoples, including the motivations behind its function as a narrative device, as well as responses to it, and the implications for both contemporary and post-colonial audiences. The concerns of my earlier work were the cultural and philosophical impetus behind the choice of neo-classicism to represent Aboriginal Australians. Although I employed Homi Bhabha's *Entstellung* – the 'displacement, distortion, dislocation, repetition' (1994: 149) that underpins colonial accounts of colonized peoples – I wish to extend this to accentuate what Bhabha has 'emphasised [as] the failure of colonial regimes to produce stable and fixed identities' of race (Loomba 2015: 112), expressly non-white race, to consider some ramifications for First Australians. I wish to emphasize the 'black out' inherent in colonial mimesis of classicism that rendered Aboriginal and Māori bodies as antiquities in a Mediterranean style. This classicizing shows indigenous bodies as imagined and anonymous, and as artefacts of the debates around race during the eighteenth century.

The Monograph of John Hunter (1793)

The First Fleet journal of John Hunter (1737–1821) continued the published account by Governor Arthur Phillip (1738–1814) in 1789 as the official record of the first years of British settlement at Sydney. Hunter was appointed to the First Fleet as second captain of the H.M.S. *Sirius* under Phillip, although during the voyage Phillip transferred to the H.M.S. *Supply* and placed Hunter in command of the *Sirius*. Hunter was involved in surveying and exploration in New South Wales. He returned to England in 1791 and spent the next few years preparing his journals for publication. He came back to Port Jackson in 1795 as the second Governor of New South Wales until 1800.

The first image, 'Frontpiece – From a sketch by Hunter' (Figures 1.1a and 1.1b), reproduces an original depicting Governor Phillip, John White (1757–1832), George Worgan (1757–1838) and an Aboriginal woman and child. This is an 'encounter' picture, recording an incident in July 1789 during an expedition to the Hawkesbury River.¹ Its classicism is romantic in style in its evocation of 'the sanitized historical allegories of peaceful encounters between Great Navigator and Gentle Savages' (Douglas 1999: 84).

The image may be genteel, but the reality behind its execution, as revealed in the accompanying text, points to the desperate situation of First Australians:

In the course of the little excursions of our boats' crews this afternoon, a native woman was discovered, concealing herself from our sight in the long grass, which was at this time very wet, and I should have thought very uncomfortable to a poor naked creature. She had, before the arrival of our boats at this beach, been, with some of her friends, employed in fishing for their daily food, but were upon their approach alarmed, and they had all made their escape, except this miserable girl, who had just recovered from the small-pox, and was very weak, and unable, from a swelling in one of her knees, to get off to any distance: she therefore crept off, and concealed herself in the best manner she could among the grass, not twenty yards from the spot on which we had placed our tents.

Hunter 1789: 102–3

As discussed previously (Johnson 2014: 421–2), there is often a disjuncture between image and text on the topic of Indigenous Australians in the journals. The engraving of the young woman shows her frightened but healthy and without overt signs of the disfiguring effects of smallpox (except for a blister on her left knee). Her crouching position, symbolic of fear, the turn of her head, her rosebud lips and her facial beauty recall the motif of the 'Crouching Aphrodite/Venus' from Hellenistic sculpture (usually extant in Roman copies), Roman coins, and stone reliefs (Kalinski 1992: 1). The motif was embraced by Renaissance artists who reproduced it continually, most notably in Italy during the first half of the sixteenth century (Holo 1978/79: 23). Some of the sculptures from antiquity, such as the 'Aphrodite Accroupie', c. 250 BC (National Archaeological Museum of Naples) and the 'Crouching Venus of Vienne', c. first or second century BC (Louvre) have an attendant Eros/Amor, which is also referenced in the 'Frontpiece' in the form of the cherub-like

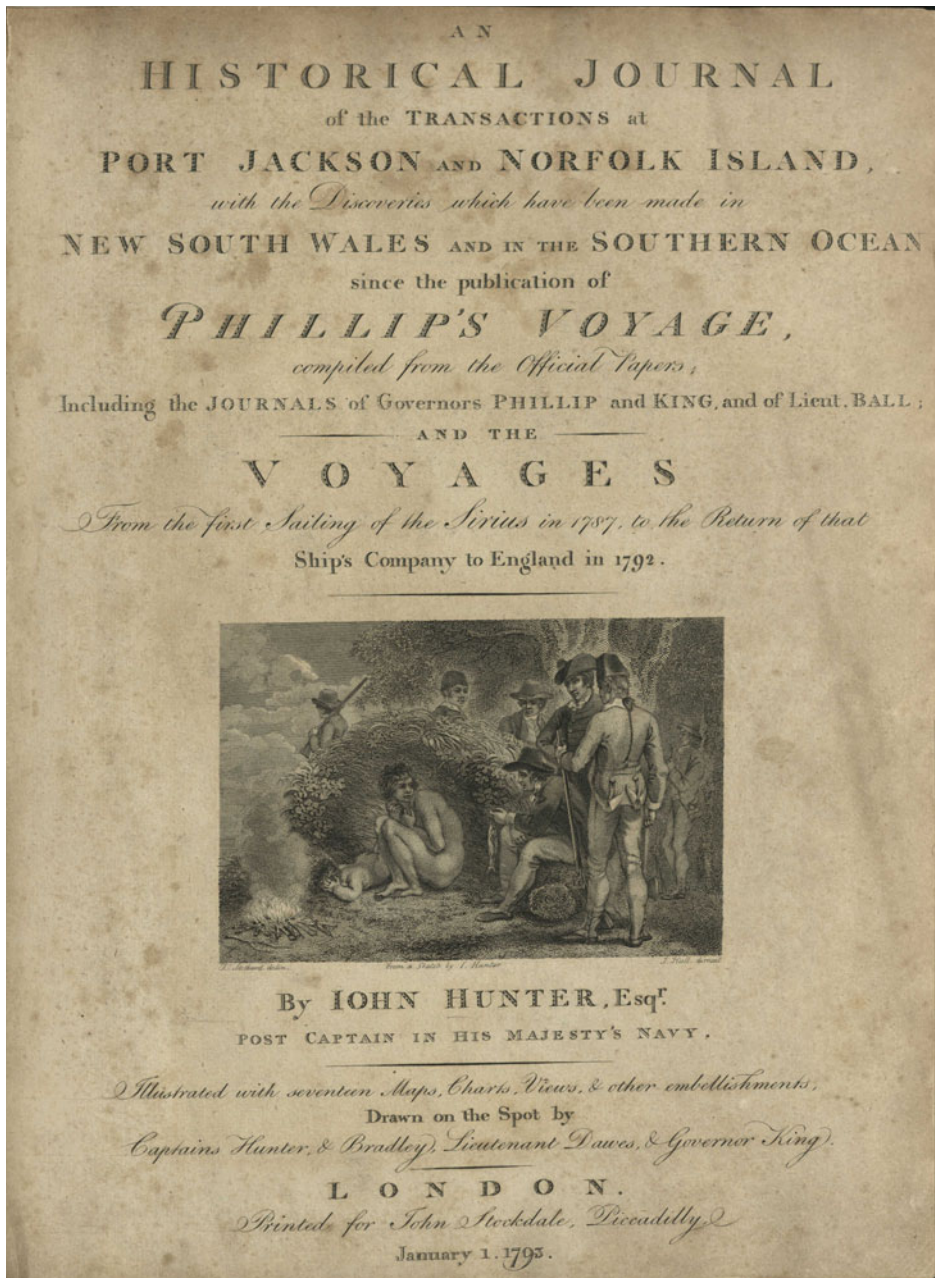


Figure 1.1a 'Frontpiece – From a sketch by Hunter.' In John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island ...* (London: Stockdale, 1793). Courtesy of The University of Newcastle Library, Cultural Collections.



Figure 1.1b 'Frontpiece [Detail] From a sketch by Hunter.' In John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island . . .* (London: Stockdale, 1793). Courtesy of The University of Newcastle Library, Cultural Collections.

infant who lies face-down in a gesture of distress. Like Aphrodite/Venus, the young woman has been discovered naked in the wilderness. While it is likely that the accidental encounter with the woman, naked and in a natural setting, prompted the allusion to the goddess disturbed at her toilette, it is noteworthy that the simile of Aphrodite/Venus had been employed in earlier travelogues to depict women of the Pacific. In Johann Reinhold Forster's *Observations made during a Voyage Round the World* (1778: 154), he describes Tahitian women accordingly: 'The arms, hands, and fingers of some are so exquisitely delicate and beautiful, that they would do honour to a Venus of Medicis.'

'A Family of New South Wales' (Figure 1.2), based on a sketch by Governor King (in the Mitchell Library, Sydney), was reproduced for publication by William Blake.

As Bernard Smith wrote: 'When Hunter's journal was published . . . the pictorial convention of the noble savage was rapidly declining from the eminent position it had held during the 1770's' (1985a: 173). Smith notes the 'newer' style in depicting indigeneity, namely the ethnographic style, which also appears in Hunter's journal (Figure 1.3). The ethnographic style is less imaginative and interpretive and therefore without an overt 'storytelling' or fictional narrative; bodies are rendered more accurately, and include racial and cultural markers, such as skin colour, hair, adornment and scarification. Such representations also regularly include artefacts (Figure 1.3).

These competing representations evident in Hunter's journal – classical and ethnographical – point to the changes in ways of interpreting indigeneity at this time.



Figure 1.2 'A Family of New South Wales.' In John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island* ... (London: Stockdale, 1793). Courtesy of The University of Newcastle Library, Cultural Collections.

Blake's design, showing signs of what was increasingly seen to be an old-fashioned approach, speaks to what Smith describes as 'the gulf between practical observation and the creative imagination' (1985a: 174).

Smith emphasizes the combination of classicism and racial authenticity (burgeoning ethnography)² that characterizes Blake's image, arguing that the latter is evident in the engraving: 'the infant on its mother's shoulders and the boy striding behind are no longer artificial *putti* but little black children' (1985a: 174). However, I contend that the mimesis of antiquity is still dominant and overrides race. While the family members are shown to



Figure 1.3 'Man of the Islands, called Lord Howe Group.' In John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island . . .* (London: Stockdale, 1793). Courtesy of The University of Newcastle Library, Cultural Collections.

be Indigenous Australians in terms of skin and hair shade, their bodies and postures reference classical art. Blake's 'boy striding behind' recalls the ideal forms of the Greek ephebe, and 'the infant on its mother's shoulders' is more *putto* than Smith acknowledges. Throughout the Enlightenment, the tendency to represent the nude male as either 'a neoclassical warrior or a feminized ephebe' (Carden-Coyne 2009: 29) is present here: the male at the front of the group is depicted as dominant, muscular and warrior-esque; the youth at the back is beardless, well built and the embodiment of the (slightly) feminized beauty of budding manhood. That the figures are in profile further attests to the classicizing influence, recalling the profiles on Greek vases. The use of classicism, therefore, in keeping with Blake's own idealism, reflects the romantic Enlightenment theory of universal brotherhood, in which 'primitive' man (Aboriginal Australian) is shown on the path to a 'civilized' state (Classical Greece). This is often symbolized in the metaphor of child ('primitive') to man ('civilized'), which is played out in this image with its abbreviated evolution of three 'ages' of mankind: adult male (front), infant boy (middle) and youth (back). The baby on the mother's back may upset a strict chronology of evolution, but he balances the image.

The overt and subtle allusions to ancient Mediterranean art spoke to English tastes of the time, which can be attested by the list of subscribers to the published journals

(included in their pages),³ as well as by the proliferation of collectors, connoisseur clubs and monumental editions such as the four-volume set, *The Antiquities of Athens*. This work, published between 1762 and 1816, and the related monograph, *Ionian Antiquities* (1770), ‘shifted interest in classical art from Italy to Greece’⁴ (Brewer 2013: 210), and untrained artists consulted them and replicated their contents.

‘A Native Wounded while asleep’

‘A Native Wounded while asleep’ by the ‘Port Jackson Painter’ (Figure 1.4) was based on ‘The Dying Gaul’, the Roman replica of the lost Hellenistic sculpture, reputedly the work of Epigonos. Commissioned during the last decades of the third century BC by Attalus I of Pergamon, the statue celebrated his victory over the Galatians in Anatolia. Scholars of Hellenistic art comment on the pathos evoked by the statue, a pathos embedded in its marble; extolling the features of the gallant ‘barbaric’ warrior brought low, the beauty and symmetry of the limbs – sturdy but in the very act of weakening as death draws closer – the grimace of pain on Stoic features – in short, capturing all the requisite features of ‘the pathos formula’ (Howard 1983: 484).



Figure 1.4 ‘Port Jackson Painter’. ‘A Native Wounded while asleep’, c. 1788–97. Courtesy of the Natural History Museum.

The broader, political meanings of the sculpture are as important as its artistic perfection. Not only does the figure pay symbolic homage to Attalus' victory over the Gauls, but it also recalls military achievements of the past and foreshadows those of the future. Regarding the past, the figure defers to the late Archaic age sculptures known as the 'Fallen Warriors' from the Aigina pediments (Howard 1983: 483). Like Attalus Soter and his 'Dying Gaul', the 'Fallen Warriors' from the temple of Aphaia 'were themselves part of an ambitious program influenced by Athens and associated with Greeks who had saved their homeland from a barbaric threat' (Howard 1983: 484). While regarded as figures from the Trojan War, the pediment sculptures celebrate the defeat of the Persians in 490 BC in a public display of imagery that is erudite, sophisticated and, most significantly, referential to a martial and cultural rhetoric defined by an entrenched response to 'alien peoples' and their 'barbarity'. Attalus and his coterie of artists also participated in this type of rhetoric, as evidenced in 'The Dying Gaul'. Believed to have been originally ensconced in the Athena Precinct at Pergamon in conjunction with other Gaul monuments, the iconography 'served as a form of propaganda, showing that Attalid ambition vied not only with the accomplishments of Hellenistic rivals, but also with the grandiose artistic programs of Perikles and earlier Archaic tyrants and kings' (Howard 1983: 485).

'The Dying Gaul' became one of the most celebrated artworks of the Renaissance. It was first recorded in an inventory of the Ludovisi collection in Rome in 1623,⁵ having been discovered around the same time 'when the Villa Ludovisi was being built in an area, on the site of the gardens of Sallust' (Haskell and Penny 1982: 224). Around 1737 the statue was in the possession of Pope Clement XII and housed in the Capitoline Museum, where it stayed until it was ceded to the French in 1797. In Paris, it was part of the triumphal procession in 1798 and displayed in the Musée Central des Arts until 1815 when it was returned to the Capitoline Museum, where it remains.

The sculpture was reproduced for the first time in 1638 by François Perrier in *Icones et Segmenta Nobil. Signorum et Statuarum quae Romae extant*. The first plaster cast was made for the king of Spain in 1650, another for the French Academy in Rome, and a marble replica for Louis XIV in 1684. Large, ungainly stone versions populated English gardens in the eighteenth century and small bronzes were considered tasteful additions to well-heeled homes. The figure was also given pride of place in Panini's ideal gallery, 'Ancient Rome' (1757).

'The Dying Gaul' was also replicated in more macabre forms. In 1776, Sir William Hunter, Professor of Anatomy at the Royal Academy of Art, dissected the corpse of a hanged smuggler, and arranged for sculptor, Agostino Carlini, to cast the flayed body in the pose of the Gaul. The nickname of the figure was 'Smugglerius'. Reading this act from a post-colonial perspective shows the Enlightenment's promulgation of the divide between mind and body in the exploitation of the criminal lower-class. This divide paralleled the approach to the treatment and representation of the indigenous peoples of the British empire. Indeed, medical and scientific approaches to the body during the Enlightenment were interconnected with colonization, both of which 'simultaneously worked to map the physical body and the larger world, and assert dominance over both' (Fear-Segal and Tillett 2013: x).

The story of ‘The Dying Gaul’ is one of intrigue and transformation characterized by various political, social and cultural signifiers and imperatives. It is not surprising that it was also appropriated in articulations of early Australian colonial history. For example, in a nineteenth-century photograph of the nascent collection of the Australian Museum, Sydney, by William Hetzer (1866), the new wing of the Museum is shown containing plaster casts of classical and Renaissance sculpture, including the ‘Venus de Milo’, the ‘Discobolus’, ‘Apollo Belvedere’, and ‘The Dying Gaul’ (Figure 1.5). As Jan Brazier (2013: 133) writes: ‘This compelling image was shown as part of New South Wales’ display at the Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition of 1866–1867 and then the Paris Exhibitions of 1867, a strong visual statement of the cultural progress of the colony.’

The ‘Port Jackson Painter’ was active in the colony from the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788 through to the mid-1790s. The name was allocated to the watercolourist and sketcher based on the similarities of style evident in anonymous works in three collections of First Fleet art: the Watling Collection and the Banks MS 34 Collection in the British Museum (Natural History) and the Rex Nan Kivell Collection in the National Library of Australia. A survey of the extant pictures of Indigenous Australians by the ‘Port Jackson



Figure 1.5 William Hetzer. ‘Upper Gallery New Wing Australian Museum. Sydney, 1866.’ Courtesy of Trove (National Library of Australia).

Painter' reveals that this image is anomalous. The other watercolours show a style concerned with representations of the Aboriginal Australians as exempla of natural history in a naive but representational style, the latter being increasingly typical of artistic approaches to such subject matter in the late-eighteenth century.

Smith interprets the painting as possessing an 'amused superiority' combined with 'a certain tenderness of feeling' (Smith 1985a: 162). These two oppositional ways of seeing point to the ambiguity of the painting. This ambiguity is enhanced by an absence of context: the image belongs to itself – it is not part of a journal, monograph or additional narrative frame. In relation to Smith's first response – 'amused superiority' – we have an example of Robert J. C. Young's colonial hybridity: 'grafting ... forcing incompatible entities to grow together (or not)' (2005: 4). The hybridity of the image exemplifies the tension of Bhabha's *Entstellung* (1994: 149) in operation when facets of an imperial culture are imposed onto a colonial one. Here is an example of a 'savage', a member of a people relegated to fauna, seen but unseen, represented in the manner of a sculpture regarded as an example of classical artistic achievement.

Regarding Smith's second response – a 'certain tenderness of feeling' – we recall the 'Fallen Warriors' from the Aigina pediments and the Gaul monuments from the Athena Precinct. In these ancient works, pathos is a characteristic of representations of conquered peoples, pointing towards moments of empathy on the part of the victors towards the vanquished. So too we may detect a similar attitude expressed on behalf of the colonists towards the colonized in this work.

The contested messages detected by Smith, and the resultant ambivalence of meaning, are also evident in early written accounts of Aboriginal Australians. In Volume 1 of David Collins' work of 1798 entitled *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*, based on the manuscripts of Lieutenant-Governor King, there is a description of a ritual that combines competing and unsettling attitudes on the part of the colonial observer:

The natives who lived about Sydney appeared to place the utmost confidence in us, choosing a clear spot between the town and the brickfield for the performance of any of their rites and ceremonies; and for three evenings the town had been amused with one of their spectacles, which might properly have been denominated a tragedy, for it was attended with a great effusion of blood. It appeared from the best account we could procure, that one or more murders having been committed in the night, the assassins, who were immediately known, were compelled, according to the custom of the country, to meet the relations of the deceased, who were to avenge their deaths by throwing spears, and drawing blood for blood. One native of the tribe of Cammerray, a very fine fellow named Carradah, who had stabbed another in the night, but not mortally, was obliged to stand for two evenings exposed to the spears not only of the man whom he had wounded, but of several other natives. He was suffered indeed to cover himself with a bark shield, and behaved with the greatest courage and resolution.

Collins 1798: 1: 586

Collins' description of the ritual includes reference to its amusing nature and snidely compares it to tragedy, but also acknowledges the integrity and bravery of the man involved – Carradah – 'a very fine fellow' who 'behaved with the greatest courage and resolution'.

The watercolour, and the words of Collins, point to respect for the First Australians as well as colonial anxiety manifest in a mocking tone. In this sense, 'A Native Wounded while asleep' is a perfect colonial artefact; it equates Aboriginal Australians with the ancient 'barbarians' and the English with ancient imperial victors. It thereby situates both the colonized and the colonist within an unambiguous imperial setting and, like Attalus' monuments, promotes a narrative of imperial justification – in this instance, dignifying it by recourse to antiquity. As John Levi Barnard states, via Seth Schein (2011):

As Seth Schein has observed, the classical is and always has been ideological, deriving its force not purely 'from its relation to a real or imagined past', but in large part 'from its relation to current social, political, and moral values that it helps to legitimate'.

2017: 2

'New Zealand War Canoe bidding defiance to the Ship'

The ink and wash drawing, 'New Zealand War Canoe bidding defiance to the Ship' (Figure 1.6), is typical of the classicizing images of Sydney Parkinson (c. 1745–71), a natural history illustrator who was employed by Joseph Banks (1743–1820) in the collection and categorization of specimens during the Pacific voyage of James Cook (1728–79), between 1768 and 1771.⁶ Parkinson is best known for his depictions of Māori in a stylized albeit realistic manner, revealing the ability to move between two artistic styles in the representation of indigeneity, namely depicting them as classical bodies as well as ethnographic ones.

The original journals and the published version edited by John Hawkesworth (1773) reveal a fascination with the canoes and navigational skills of the Māori. In Parkinson's journal, he records various Māori canoes challenging English ships. He describes one encounter, taking place off Cape Kidnappers, a headland on the east coast of New Zealand's North Island, on 15 October 1769 in which nine canoes challenge H. M. S. *Endeavour*:

... in which were one hundred and sixty of the natives: they behaved in a very irresolute manner, sometimes seeming as if they would attack us; then taking fright, and retreating a little; one half paddling one way, and the other half paddling another, shaking their lances and bone bludgeons at us, talking very loudly and blustering, lolling out their tongues, and making other signs of defiance.

Parkinson 1773: 92



Figure 1.6 Sydney Parkinson. 'New Zealand War Canoe bidding defiance to the Ship', 1770. © British Library. Add.Ms.23920f.50.

Parkinson's illustration has elements of the ethnographic style in the representation of the canoe, the Māori clothing, and the Māori haka (challenge and/or war signal). There is, coincidentally, a non-intentional classical element in the central figure who is shown wearing a traditional Māori draped garment (see Wallace 2002), which resembles the generic attire referenced by artists in their depictions of the peoples of the ancient Mediterranean. It is mostly in the artistic composition of Parkinson's illustration, however, that a classical debt is evident. As Joppien and Smith (1985: 37) point out: 'Parkinson addressed himself to the problem of portraying individuals clearly while relating them as a group – the traditional problem of classical figure compositions.' Parkinson was attentive to each segment of his images (Figure 1.6), which demonstrates a design based on the ordering of the figures in clusters of three and four, and 'closing the groups by posing the end figures in 'closed' positions' (1985: 37). This design and style shows Parkinson's 'acquaintance with the compositional devices of classical relief sculpture' (Joppien and Smith 1985: 37), expressly in his definition of space by the sculptural or solid forms of the figures and the limited background plane. Classical Greek relief design is partly characterized by the representation of the back plane as a fixed and solid barrier that enables the figures to be displayed in a static yet theatrical, monumental style. Parkinson replicates this flat surface upon which the figures are placed as if to echo histrionic tableaux such as the warriors from the Aigina pediments.

Parkinson's numerous depictions of the canoes were entrusted to Irish artist, John James Barralet (c. 1747–1815) to be prepared for inclusion in Hawkesworth's edition of the collected accounts of Cook and Banks, among other members of the expedition to

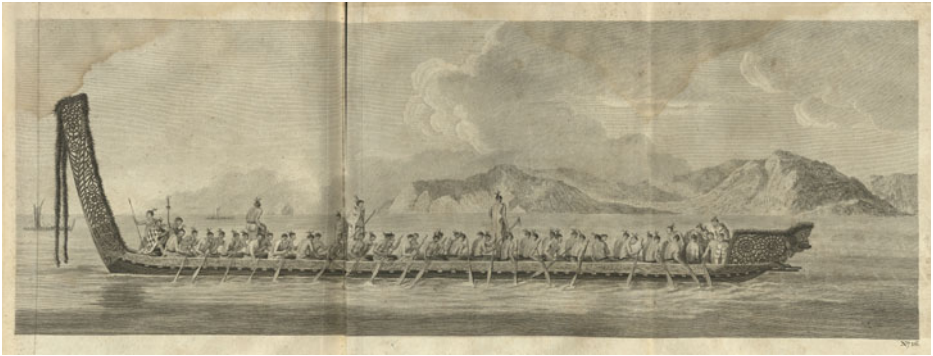


Figure 1.7 John James Barralet. 'A war canoe of New Zealand, with a view of Gable End Foreland.' In John Hawkesworth, *An account of the voyages undertaken by the order of His present Majesty for making discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere* (London: W. Strahan; and T. Cadell in the Strand, 1773). Vol. 3. Courtesy of The University of Newcastle Library, Cultural Collections.

the Pacific (1768–71). Like Hunter's publication, Hawkesworth's *An account of the voyages undertaken by the order of His present Majesty for making discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere* has several chapters on the indigenous peoples of the Pacific, including Māori. Barralet produced the engraving entitled 'A war canoe of New Zealand, with a view of Gable End Foreland' (Figure 1.7), which is a luxuriant triple-page spread that replicates the classicism of Parkinson's composition but in a more formal and austere style. This serious, sombre interpretation of the original illustration – indicative of heroic classicism – replaces the emotions inherent in Parkinson's original that reflect his written accounts of wonderment and bemused anxiety at the nautical haka (Parkinson 1773: 93).

A classical tenor is detectable in parts of Hawkesworth's edition, not only in relation to the engraving of the Māori war canoe, but also in the written text, including a description of the women of Tolaga Bay, on the coast of New Zealand's North Island, printed some ten pages before the plate by Barralet. Continuing the seafaring theme that partly characterizes the accounts of the Māori, the women of Tolaga Bay are described in the act of catching lobsters:

Some of us happening one day to land upon a small island in Tolaga Bay, we surprized several of them [women] at this employment; and the chaste Diana, with her nymphs, could not have discovered more confusion and distress at the sight of Actæon, than these women expressed upon our approach. Some of them hid themselves among the rocks, and the rest crouched down in the sea till they had made themselves a girdle and apron of such weeds as they could find and when they came out, even with this veil, we could perceive that their modesty suffered much pain by our presence. The girdle and apron which they wear in common, have been mentioned before.

Hawkesworth 3: 454

Antipodean Antiquities

The classical motif of naked women in natural water, and the male intrusion on the scene, recalls the 'Frontpiece' of Hunter's journal that depicts the Aboriginal woman and infant. The mixture of the austere, heroic classicism of Barralet's engraving, coupled with the highly self-conscious simile of Diana and her nymphs at their bath, points to the mingling of the different manifestations of classicism inherent in the colonial responses to Aboriginal Australians and Māori. Here the reference to classicism also facilitates a mild form of titillation for the male readers.

Black Out

The images discussed herein depict Aboriginal Australians and Māori with certain racial features, such as skin colour and hair. I posit, however, that the physical markers of race are compromised because recourse to classicism dominates the compositions. To examine these images as case studies of imagined bodies, neither completely authentic, nor completely marked by race, nor completely classical, suggests a reading of the indigenous body as 'other' and ultimately uninterpretable. These bodies are related to, but different from, the body as a site of dignified racial difference. This 'black out' reflects and perpetrates a dehumanization that rendered the indigenous peoples of Australasia as works of art. Furthermore, I suggest that this transformation also works to render indigenous bodies as specimens. This was partly accomplished through the normalization of the process of recording and viewing the indigenous body as 'record', 'art' and 'hybrid':

To shoot or poison the local people and appropriate their land is to exercise one kind of power. To measure their heads, cover their loins, record their tongues, sketch their faces, or film their ceremonies is to exercise quite another kind of power, milder, subtler, often benign in its intentions, yet possessed none the less of its own significance, implying a relationship of subject to object, observer to observed, and implying also a need for Europeans to work energetically in the cause of Aboriginal salvage and salvation.

Donaldson and Donaldson 1985: 15

My proposed alignment of artistic, classical and ethnographic visual recordings with the materialization of art into artefact was already a precedent in the case of the hung smuggler literally transformed into the 'Dying Gaul'. And, by the early 1800s, the bodies of indigenous Australasians became highly sought-after 'antiquities' that were traded by all sorts of people; from scientists, to museum directors and private collectors, to opportunists interested in making money through the sale of 'oddities', to amateur archaeologists and armchair scholars. Governor King and Joseph Banks, both of whom studied Aboriginal Australians and Māori – with King having provided the template for the engraving of William Blake discussed herein – moved on to more brutal forms of collecting. In 1801, for example, an exasperated and humiliated King declared his arch-nemesis, Pemulwuy, of Eora Country,⁷ a public outlaw and offered a reward for his

capture. Pemulwuy was shot by Henry Hacking on 2 June 1802 and by the order of King his head was preserved and sent to England to Banks. In the accompanying letter to Banks, King wrote:

Altho' a terrible pest to the colony, he was a brave and independent character. Understanding that the possession of a New Hollander's head is among the desiderata, I have put it in spirits and forwarded it by the *Speedy*.

While a man of limited but not impoverished education, King's words to Banks add a further note of the Enlightenment's debt to classicism, though in a decidedly different vein to the artistic one so far discussed, namely the rhetoric of ancient imperialism.⁸ While receiving a reasonable schooling, but essentially one that prepared him for the life of a seaman, King would have, nevertheless been exposed to a classical education. Additionally, it should be noted that King was mentored by Banks, a man of extensive education (Eton and Oxford) who, although he preferred Botany to Classics, was more than well versed in the imperial tenets of both Greek and Roman cultures (see Heringman 2013).

King's dilemma in dealing with Pemulwuy is obvious: he was placed in a situation that saw Pemulwuy successfully defeating the colonizers from 1790 until his death in 1802, which in turn meant that while he was hostile towards Pemulwuy, as a colonial administrator he was forced to define him as a 'brave and independent character' to justify the prolonged inability of the English to defeat him. Pemulwuy thus emerges, in the words of King, as a worthy adversary. Such ideological reasoning is reminiscent of the Roman attitude towards numerous 'primitives', including the British and Germanic tribes.⁹ As with such – ironically – British subjects from another imperial narrative, Pemulwuy is, like Boudicca, Caratacus and Calgacus, for example, not quite the 'noble savage', but not quite the wicked 'savage' either. Like them, he is positioned mid-way; *terrible* pests in every meaning of the adjective but nevertheless brave and independent characters.¹⁰ Such comparisons are sometimes contested by scholars. While Richard Hingley states 'that the Enlightenment and the advent of modernity marked a dramatic discontinuity with the past' (2005: 5), he also points out, in relation to the work of Charles Martindale, the 'telling of 'stories' from the past 'integrates us into our culture, while also allowing us to interrogate it' (2005: 4). Martindale offers insightful methodologies for navigations such as mine, privileging an approach that confronts the western individual and indeed the western collective per se with the essence of his/her/their cultural and imperial heritage. Citing T. S. Eliot, Martindale articulates and confronts the role of Classical Studies, particularly Reception Studies, in the definition of what it is to be western and/or European (see Hingley 2005: 129, n.76):

'We are all', he wrote, 'so far as we inherit the civilization of Europe, still citizens of the Roman Empire.'

Eliot in Martindale 1992: 25

Antipodean Antiquities

The picturesque nature of the new classicism of the Enlightenment was a lie when appropriated in artistic endeavours to record and idealize the original owners of Australia and New Zealand, lending credence to both Bhabha's and Ian McLean's (2003) notions of disconnection and mythologizing. Of relevance and poignancy is Banks' reply to King: '... the head of one of your subjects, which is said to have caused some Comical consequences when opened at the Customs house ... makes a figure in the Museum of the Late Mr Hunter' (Banks to King 1803).¹¹

In this most confronting reference to Pemulwuy by a member of the imperial elite, the Classical Tradition continued, albeit in a different manner. As the colonized unwillingly yielded their spoils in the forms of 'barbaric' artefacts, strange plants and exotic animals, the museums and rooms of private collectors became filled with King's so-called 'desiderata'. Included among the insignia of colonizers' triumphs were the heads and skulls of Aboriginal Australians. These were proudly displayed alongside the sculptures of Greece and Rome, Egyptian mummies and stuffed crocodiles.¹²

CHAPTER 2

AUSTRALIA AS UNDERWORLD: CONVICT CLASSICS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Rachael White

Introduction

In his 1912 poem, *The Bush*, Bernard O'Dowd envisioned Australia as the culmination of centuries of human achievement, a 'prophecy . . . fulfilled' (O'Dowd 1912: 66). A glorious future beckoned, in which Australia was 'the scroll on which we are to write/mythologies our own and epics new' (O'Dowd 1912: 68). *The Bush* was one of several attempts to write an 'epic new' for Australia, including the politician William Charles Wentworth's 'Australasia' (1823), in which he hailed his homeland as 'Empress of the southern wave', and foresaw the day when, after Britain's decline, she would become 'a new Britannia in another world' (1812: 3, 22). This genre of poem was central to what Robert Dixon identified as a dominant theme in colonial Australian literature, 'the imperial destiny of a young nation' (1863: 3). In *The Course of Empire* (1986), Dixon argued that a classicizing nationalism developed in the art and literature of early New South Wales – a nationalism premised on the idea that the progress of history was cyclical. Empires rose and fell; Rome had surpassed Athens, and Britain had surpassed Rome in her turn; 'the logic of history . . . suggested, at least to some, that in future the course of empire may lie in the southern hemisphere' (Dixon 1986: 3).

But this optimistic vision sat uneasily with a lingering awareness of the colonies' origins as penal settlements. Wentworth, writing during the era of transportation, acknowledged that 'slav'ry's badge, the felon's shame' cast a cloud over the glories to come (1823: 15). For others, Australia's convict origins suggested a regressive narrative that ran counter to 'the course of empire', in which the colonization of Australia was a process of inevitable decline. This narrative, too, borrowed from the classical past. When the influential colonist Sir Charles Nicholson died in 1903, a newspaper noted that he had come 'to Australia in "the dark days" when people in England considered a residence in New South Wales as being little short of a residence in Hades' ('Charles Nicholson' 1903). In the 1860s, Nicholson himself had wondered whether 'Nature has not imposed insuperable obstacles to the Colonies . . . ever becoming great and prosperous communities; speculating that 'the whole area is gradually sinking, becoming a sort of "Atlantis" . . .' (Nicholson 1866: 192–3).

The unknown southern continent had long been associated with darkness and inversion in the European imagination. After colonization, this was reinforced by the perception that the continent was the home of moral outcasts. In 1836, upon taking up the post of Governor of Van Diemen's Land, Sir John Franklin was warned of the danger

that 'sowing with rotten seed' might lead to the 'corruption of [the] breed for generations (Arnold 1836; 1845: 47–8). Anxieties about the moral and physical degeneration of the British 'race' in Australian conditions grew during the nineteenth century (Griffiths 1996: 12), and these anxieties were often expressed through metaphors of descent, or sinking, which borrowed from the classical literature. Australia was not a new Britain or a new Rome, but an ancient underworld.

This chapter explores the narrative of regression, which existed alongside 'the course of empire'. It is largely concerned with the perspectives of transported convicts in places of secondary punishment, whose existence was often regretted or elided by those who took an optimistic view of the colony's future: the first Governor of New South Wales, Arthur Phillip, wrote that he 'would not wish convicts to lay the foundations of an empire' (c. 1786–7; 1979: 52). This is not to say that convicts were always excluded from the rhetoric of progress: Dixon identified the convict Michael Massey Robinson, the unofficial 'poet laureate' of the fifth Governor of New South Wales, Lachlan Macquarie, as one of the chief exponents of the course of empire (Dixon 1986: Ch. 2).

By way of background, this chapter first examines receptions that overlay the Australian landscape with the geography of Hades, both before and immediately after British colonization. I then turn to 'Macquarie Harbour, 1829', a poem by the convict John Thompson (born c. 1806), in which he identifies the penal colony with 'Pluto's Land'. Next, I discuss 'A Convict's Tour to Hell', by Francis McNamara (c. 1810–61), which describes an underworld peopled by officials of the transportation system (c. 1839; 2005). Finally, I look at convict accounts in which prison officials are compared to Nero, a rhetorical strategy that suggested that New South Wales was an outpost of Britain in decline.

Infernal geography

In 1931, the poet Kenneth Slessor envisioned James Cook coming to the Coral Sea, and choosing 'a passage into the dark': 'So, too, Cook made choice,/Over the brink, into the devil's mouth ...' (1931; 2011: 270–5). The extent to which the hazily outlined southern continent was associated with hellishness before European colonization is disputed.¹ Bernard Smith argued that 'to the ancients the antipodes was a kind of nether world; to the peoples of the Middle Ages its forms of life were monstrous' (1976: 166). Alfred Hiatt suggests that although there was a tradition in romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries of associating the Antipodes with the Underworld, it was not dominant; rather, the continent was primarily a 'strange location for philosophy – [a] place of reflection, isolation and self-discovery, a blank space, and so a mirror for humanity' (2012: 14). Nevertheless, the wreck of the Dutch East India Company vessel *Batavia* off the Western Australian coast in 1629, and the mutiny and massacre of many of the survivors which followed, did much to entrench a connection in the European imaginary between the southern continent and moral darkness. 'Few came out of it [the story of the *Batavia*] well', says Christopher Wortham, 'and the worst casualty may be thought of as the reputation of the land on which the massacre had taken place' (2012: 78).

Early accounts of the colony developed its association with infernal landscapes. Watkin Tench (1758–1833), a marine officer in the First Fleet, peppered his description of New Holland with references to Milton's *Paradise Lost*. He linked the departure of the First Fleet from Portsmouth to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise (Tench 1789: 6–7; Milton 12.645). Once in New South Wales, Tench led an expedition to the Blue Mountains, where he and his men surveyed 'the wild abyss; pondering our voyage', as Satan had done 'on the brink of Hell' in Book 2 (Tench 1793: 27; Milton 2.910–20). He cast himself in the role of Satan again as he and his men toiled their 'uncouth way' through the unfamiliar landscape; on his voyage to the new world Satan had '[t]oiled out my uncouth passage, forced to ride/Th' untractable abyss, plunged in the womb/Of unoriginal Night and Chaos wild' (Tench 1793: 118; Milton 10.245–7).

These were the descriptions of a man who was able to leave the colony in 1791 (Fitzhardinge 1967). John Thompson arrived in Van Diemen's Land at the age of eighteen in 1824 under sentence of seven years' transportation for stealing carpenter's tools and was sentenced to a further fourteen years for offences within the colony ('John Thompson – Conduct Record' 1803–43; 'Alphabetical Registers' 1803–30). Thompson's only extant poem, 'Macquarie Harbour, 1829' (1832), identifies the Australian landscape with Hell, but has nothing of the dramatic quality of Tench's allusions to Milton. Its tone is melancholic. It appears in the diary of the Quaker missionary George Washington Walker, who visited Macquarie Harbour with his fellow missionary, James Backhouse, in June 1832 (Walker 1832). Macquarie Harbour was a place of secondary punishment for convicts who re-offended or who had proved otherwise intractable; its location had been chosen in part for its remoteness. Backhouse was given a copy of the poem by one of the convicts, and Walker considered that it showed 'some ingenuity in the writer, tho' the ideas may be expressed in homely style'. He recorded it 'for the sake of giving a faithful picture of their [the convicts'] sentiments with regard to their punishment', acknowledging that he had made 'a few slight alterations in the orthography & words, but they are chiefly confined to the former'.

Thompson's poem describes a typical day's labour at Macquarie Harbour. He begins by identifying himself and his fellow prisoners as the subjects of Hades:

Here stand two isles of cruel land,*
Where pity's heart is froze
O'erspread with Pluto's wretched band,**
All men of mighty woes.²

According to Walker, the expression 'Pluto's wretched band' alluded to 'a wretched opinion prevalent amongst the prisoners that a certain number of them are doomed to eternal destruction, & that it is vain to attempt averting the decree of Fate'. Thompson refers to Pluto again in a later stanza:

Three posts triangle firmly stand,*****
Deep stain'd with human gore,

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A picture-frame for Pluto's land,
Where poor men's flesh is tore.

Walker's note here directed his reader to a sketch that he included alongside the poem, of 'the whipping post term'd a "Triangle" [sic]'. Even without illustration, Thompson's 'picture-frame for Pluto's land' is a striking image: the landscape of Van Diemen's Land must be seen through a prism of suffering. Though not devoid of beauty ('the moon in glitt'ring beauty rode') or birdsong ('each warbling bird'), the landscape is 'cruel', with 'raging tempests' and 'lonely woods', and the birds tear the 'withered flesh' of Pluto's band. By 1829, Thompson had received twenty-five lashes on two separate occasions ('John Thompson – Conduct Record' 1803–43). Macquarie Harbour is linked to the underworld by torment.

The poem suggests that Thompson and his fellow prisoners are as men already dead: they 'scarce survive from death', are 'lost to all that's dear', and are 'poor exiles . . . forever lost'. This gives a poetic force to the idea that convicts had died a kind of legal death, and entered an 'after-life on the other side of the world' (Atkinson 1994: 90); Atkinson argues that Governor Arthur used Macquarie Harbour as 'a place beyond the law, to which convicts might be wrongly sent and wrongly held with a fair chance that their complaints would never reach the wide world' (2008: 87.2). This sense of isolation, of being cut off from the living, pervades the poem:

Parents in vain mourn children dear,
Till tears have dimm'd their sight
Expecting from their sons to hear
Who sleep in tenfold night.

The poem concludes with a plea to the reader to believe its account:

I hope, & trust you'll understand
It's truth that I record;
I hope each hand of Pluto's band
May meet a just reward.

We know little of Thompson's background, although it is one of the quirks of the records the convict system generated that we have a detailed physical description of him: he had brown hair, dark grey eyes, a scar above his right eyebrow, and had once broken his right arm ('Alphabetical Registers' 1803–30). He was tried and sentenced in Liverpool, but he gave his town of origin as Brunton in Yorkshire ('Alphabetical Registers' 1803–30). He evidently had a turn for verse making – he was punished in October 1832 with a further twenty-five lashes for making 'improper lines' and 'turning the Rev Mr Schofield [the penal colony's chaplain] into ridicule' ('John Thompson – Conduct Record' 1803–43). There is nothing in this poem to suggest that John Thompson's knowledge of classical mythology or literature was extensive. He nevertheless made a point, three times, of

linking his place of exile to the domain of the Roman god of the Underworld; perhaps it was this classicizing flourish that caused Walker to take the trouble to copy it out.

Thompson was not alone in identifying Macquarie Harbour with the underworld. James Backhouse noted that the rocks that guarded the entrance to the harbour were known as 'Hell's Gates', and observed 'many of the prisoners recklessly asserting that all who entered in hither were doomed to eternal perdition' (1843: 45). When Macquarie Harbour was closed, and replaced by Port Arthur as the main penal settlement of Van Diemen's Land, the geography of the underworld was read onto its landscape as well. Thomas Lempriere (1796–1852) cavilled at the public perception of Port Arthur as an 'Earthly Hell', but recorded that it had

... its Cerberus in the shape of eleven ferocious dogs, some of them bloodhounds, with chains just long enough to meet one another without allowing them to expend on each other the destructive inclinations they are intended to bestow on those who attempt to force their post. These dogs form an impassable line across the Neck. To pass them without the necessary protection has been found impossible, indeed one of the Sergeants of the 21st Regiment, a bold and resolute man, made the attempt, but a severe wound from the fangs of one of Cerberus' heads showed him the impracticability.

Lempriere 1839; 1954: 69

These classical associations have left their mark on the map of Tasmania. It is not now clear who first named the River Styx in southern Tasmania, but one of its tributaries is the Charon. Even the earlier name, 'Van Diemen's Land', was suggestive; the colonial historian John West wrote of the renaming that 'while Tasmania is a melodious and simple sound, "Van Diemen" is harsh, complex, and infernal' (West 1852; 2011: 4).

A 'jaunty Dantesquerie'

John Thompson appeared resigned to his sojourn in the Underworld, but his fellow convict, Francis McNamara, did not accept that convicts were doomed to eternal damnation. 'Frank the Poet', as McNamara styled himself, was convicted of stealing a plaid at Kilkenny in Ireland and transported to Australia in 1832 (Meredith and Whalan 1979: 2); the poetry attributed to him survived for the most part in oral circulation and was written down in the late nineteenth century.³ 'A Convict's Tour To Hell' (McNamara c. 1839; 2005) is a long narrative poem whose speaker ('Frank') dreams that he has died and descended to the underworld. He goes first to Purgatory, where he meets Pope Pius VII, but is informed that there is no place for him there: 'This place was made for Priests and Popes/'Tis a world of our own invention.' Frank then tries the gate to Hell, but is refused admittance by Satan: 'I detest and hate the poor/And none shall in my kingdom stand/Except the grandees of the land.' Satan does allow Frank to have a quick look around, however, and Frank discovers that Hell is peopled not by convicts, but by the

officials and architects of the convict system: Cook ‘who discovered New South Wales’ and ‘he that first invented gaols’ are found ‘tied to a fiery stake . . . in yonder boiling lake’. When he has looked his fill at the sufferings of his persecutors, Frank ascends and is welcomed by St Peter into Heaven, only to wake and discover that it was all a dream.

The poem is described by the Australian poet Les Murray as a ‘jaunty Dantesquerie’ (2005: 1). McNamara’s ‘tour to Hell’ does not follow precisely the order of the *Divine Comedy*; Frank looks in on Purgatory before Hell. John Meredith and Rex Whalan identified a poem once attributed to Jonathan Swift, ‘The Story of Orpheus; Burlesqued’,⁴ as an influence (Meredith and Whalan 1979: 27). It is also very much in the style of Swift’s ‘A Character, Panegyric and Description of the Legion Club’ (1736; 1958), which in turn borrows extensively from Virgil.⁵ In the Virgilian tradition of Dante and Swift, McNamara imagines the Underworld as a place of specific and appropriate punishments for wrongdoers, though the comic effect he achieves is particularly Swiftian (Reece 1991: 173). Murray remarked upon how ‘lightly done, free from sadism or rage’ the poem is, given the hardships its author endured (2005: 1), and it is true that although the poem revels in the suffering of McNamara’s tormentors, its violence is cartoonish rather than gruesome.

Many of the descriptions of the suffering inflicted on ‘nobles of judicial orders/ Barristers Lawyers and Recorders’ and ‘Hangmen gaolers and flagellators’ use conventionally hellish imagery: there are ‘flames of brimstone’ and ‘lakes of sulphur’. But McNamara took care to provide personalized punishments for those who were particularly hated: Thomas Morisset, a police magistrate and former commandant of Norfolk Island, and James Clunie, a magistrate who had previously served as the commandant of the Moreton Bay penal colony, appear ‘lashed together’ with ‘a fiery belt . . . As tight as soles to upper leather’. A notorious police runner is ‘standing on his head/ In a river of melted boiling lead’ while snakes devour his entrails.

McNamara’s description of the Underworld makes several references to the geography of Hades. Frank approaches the ‘Stygian lake’, where he is met by an uncharacteristically kindly Charon, who offers to ferry him across the Styx without payment:

Are you that person? Charon cried,
I’ll carry you to the other side.
Five or sixpence I mostly charge
For the like passage in my barge
So stranger do not troubled be
For you shall have a passage free.⁶

The phrase ‘Stygian lake’ appears in Book 6 of the *Aeneid*, and was in use in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poetry and drama.⁷ There are perhaps echoes of Dante in his references to Vulcan’s forge, in which ‘old Serjeant Flood’ is chained, like Capaneus in the *Divine Comedy* (14.43–67). Vulcan is also on hand to chain Governor Darling when he arrives in the underworld. McNamara draws on Irish sagas, too: the hero ‘Osker’ (Oscar) (Mackillop 2004) will thrash one of the sufferers with an iron flail until the world ends.

The poem's casual allusiveness to classical and Celtic mythology also appears in McNamara's other works. 'A Petition from the A. A. Co. Flocks at Peels River on behalf of the Irish Bard' (McNamara n.d.; 2005: 5–8) includes a reference to an episode in Book 2 of François Fénelon's *Les Aventures de Télémaque*, which had appeared in several English translations by the time of McNamara's transportation.⁸

Unlike Thompson, Frank does not take up permanent residence in the part-classical, part-Christian hell he envisions. Frank is 'thoroughly purged from sin' by what he has endured, and is permitted to 'soar to heaven' with other convicts, while the Governor and others remain below. But this inversion is not the only way in which McNamara uses words with a classical resonance to censure the convict system. His poems are full of references to tyrants and tyranny. In 'The Convict's Arrival' he rejoices at the death of Patrick Logan, the commandant of Moreton Bay ('kind providence came to our assistance/And gave this tyrant his fatal stroke'); he describes himself in his 'Epigram of Introduction' as 'sworn to be a tyrant's foe'; and in a poem on the seizure of the brig *Cyprus*, Macquarie Harbour is 'that place of tyranny' (McNamara n.d.; 2005: 4–5, 22–4). Convicts often accused officials of the transportation system of tyranny, but I turn now to the identification of officials with a specific tyrant, the emperor Nero.

'As great a tyrant as Nero ever was'

Norfolk Island was a place of secondary punishment, like Macquarie Harbour and Port Arthur – though its early visitors saw not an underworld, but paradisiacal beauty. It was a *locus amoenus* waiting to be riven by violence: the colonial historian John West thought it was 'destined to exhibit the extremes of natural beauty and moral deformity' (1852; 2011: 37). This is how it appeared to the convict Laurence Frayne, who arrived in New South Wales in 1826 and was sent to Norfolk Island in 1830. According to his fellow convict Thomas Cook, Frayne was sentenced to a total of 1,175 lashes during his time there (Cook 1841–3; 1978: 57). Under the brief and kindlier regime of the prison reformer Alexander Maconochie from 1840 to 1844, Frayne wrote an account of his imprisonment under previous commandants. Transportation had consigned Frayne to 'Human Hell', presided over by 'monsters in human shape'; his captors were 'demons', engaged in a 'nefarious traffic in plunder & blood', in a place of 'Tyranny cruelty oppression' (Frayne c. 1840–3: 2–3). Like Thompson, he thought of himself and his fellow prisoners as living dead: 'a vast number of hideous spectres collected together' and 'skeletons ... nominally covered with flesh & blood' (Frayne c. 1840–3: 13). Frayne appears to subscribe to the view that men were degenerating in Australia; he was 'reduced to the lowest grade of civilized life', 'not like a human being but like a brute & beast of burden', whereas under Maconochie, he wrote, 'we considered ourselves as elevated to the Standard of Men once more' (c. 1840–3: 2, 4, 8). He attributes this degeneration not to the convicts' own moral iniquity, but to that of the system: his account is punctuated by excursions on penal policy, and praise for the system of incentives for good behaviour introduced by Maconochie.

Antipodean Antiquities

Frayne's manuscript describes an occasion on which he was called before the commandant and sentenced to 100 lashes:

After the sentence I plainly told the Commandant in the Court that he was a tyrant he replied that no man ever said that about him before I said that they knew the consequence too well to tell him so, But I tell you so in stark naked blunt English that you are as great a tyrant as Nero ever was the moment I had expressed these words I was sentenced an additional 100 & to be kept ironed down in a cell for life and never to see daylight again.⁹

Frayne c. 1840–3: 15

This is not an isolated reference: the commandants of penal settlements were repeatedly identified with Nero. Two convict accounts in the Norfolk Island Convict Papers refer to him.¹⁰ 'F. Davies' describes the commandant of Macquarie Harbour, John Cuthbertson, as

...the most inhuman Tyrant the world ever produced since the reign of Nero. I have seen several Commandants on Norfolk Island, but the worst of them was a man of feeling compared with him. His motto seemed to be Oppression and Tyranny.

Davies c. 1842–67: 108–9

Major Thomas Bunbury, an earlier commandant of Norfolk Island, was also 'a second Nero', according to the account of another convict, James Porter (Porter c. 1842–67).

Nero was notorious by this time as the worst of tyrants (Gwyn 1991). In the nineteenth century, he had an 'unequivocally evil reputation' (Vance 1997: 259), and despite the efforts of revisionist historians, he 'lives on to this day as a symbol of archetypal tyranny' (Kugelmeier 2015). The persecution of Christians was prominent in his reception, as was the turmoil of his personal life (Kugelmeier 2015). An early emperor, Nero was nevertheless associated in the popular imagination in this period with the decadence to which Rome's decline was often attributed (Vance 1997: 262). Dixon argued that Governor Macquarie had 'fostered a cult of Augustan leadership', 'gathering about him a circle of poets, painters and architects who would turn Sydney into [in the words of Michael Massey Robinson] "a second Rome, rising at the antipodes"' (1986: 25). Macquarie was seen to be restoring order to the colony after the 'civil strife' of the Bligh administration, much as the Augustan era had ended the Roman civil wars (Dixon 1986: 30). But the use of Nero's name to tar officials of the convict system implicitly challenged the idea that New South Wales was a nascent Rome, with its republican and Augustan glory days ahead of it. It suggested instead a civilization in decay.¹¹

References to Nero and tyranny also linked convict complaints about the transportation system to the anti-slavery campaign in the nineteenth century. Slave-owners were accused of Neronian tyranny (see, for example Wilberforce 1792: 6; Walpole 1845: 33), and comparisons between ancient slavery and the contemporary practice were

significant in the abolition movement (Alston, Hall and McConnell 2011: 14–15). In the United States at around the same time, African Americans contesting the practice of slavery, and in particular the racist ideas which underpinned its modern form, distinguished the ancient practice from the modern, arguing that the latter was crueler and more unjust, in part because of its racial basis (Goings and O'Connor 2011: 97–8). Modern slavery itself became a comparator for convict transportation, and in particular for the assignment system. McNamara has the convicts who seized the *Cyprus* bidding 'adieu to slavery' (McNamara n.d.; 2005: 24), while Frayne alludes to a 'nefarious traffic in plunder & blood.' Sometimes direct links were drawn between convict transportation and ancient slavery: the Archbishop of Dublin, Richard Whately, in his 1832 pamphlet *Thoughts on Secondary Punishments*, likened convict labour to slavery in ancient Rome, emphasizing the capacity of slavery (and analogously of the assignment system) to corrupt masters (1832: 55, 91). During the debates over the continuation of transportation in 1850, an emancipist borrowed the identity of the ancient world's best-known slave, Spartacus, to defend the contribution of convicts to the society that shunned them:

The Tasmanians boast of the resources of their Island! yet, who but Prisoners opened these resources – for how many lives were lost – how many lashes inflicted during the formation of the Launceston road, alone, every mile of which was redolent of *Triangles*, and of *blood*!

‘Spartacus’ 1850

The afterlife

In nineteenth-century Australia, classical allusions often served to display an author's erudition and to assert social status; when they appear in the writings of convicts, they work in a similar way. They assert that their speaker belongs to a more civilized community than the isolated and dehumanizing prison to which he is presently condemned. To a nineteenth-century audience, these allusions elevated the convicts' complaints from the particular to the universal and lent them greater interest. Thompson's poem, with its references to 'Pluto's band', found its way into the diary of a missionary charged with reporting to the Governor on the conditions in Macquarie Harbour; Frayne's accusations of tyranny were forwarded by Maconochie to Governor Gipps, though Gipps declined to forward his account to Lord John Russell in Britain (Wills 2015: 320–1).

The vision of Australia as an underworld has left a mark on the historiography and fictional representations of the period. Marcus Clarke's novel, *His Natural Life*, published shortly after the end of transportation to Australia in 1868, imagined the voyage from Britain as a katabatic journey:

It is impossible to convey, in words, any idea of the hideous phantasmagoria of shifting limbs and faces which moved through the evil-smelling twilight of this terrible prison-house. Callot might have drawn it, Dante might have suggested it,

but a minute attempt to describe its horrors would but disgust. There are depths in humanity which one cannot explore, as there are mephitic caverns into which one dare not penetrate.

Clarke 1870–2; 1886: 35

Robert Hughes caught the habit of identifying Australia with the Underworld from his sources. In his popular history of Australia's convict past, *The Fatal Shore* (1986), the gaols from which convicts were drawn are 'the republics of a sublimated criminal class; they belonged to the antipodes of crime, not to the bright world of authority'; he imagined the landscape of Australia appearing to European settlers as 'that of Hell itself' (1986: 39, 44). Hamish Maxwell-Stewart's history of Macquarie Harbour, *Closing Hell's Gates*, which refers to Thompson's poem in the title of one of its chapters, 'Pluto's Land', also depicts the voyages of convicts to places of secondary punishment as a katabatic journey: 'as each secondarily convicted man and woman passed through the small hatchway in the deck they descended into a shadowy realm' (2008: 10).

Sic Fortis Etruria Crevit, ran the motto on the Great Seal of New South Wales, 'thus Etruria grew strong' ('A New Seal' 1791; 1917). The motto comes from Virgil's *Georgics* (2.532–40); it attributes Etruria's (and Rome's) greatness to a past, golden agricultural era, and it is a fitting motto for a colony that saw itself as the latest foundation in that tradition. But Archbishop Whately used a different Virgilian quotation to express his view of the idea that 'a large and civilized nation, in establishing a new colony, instead, like the ancients, of carrying the sacred fire from the hearth of the state, would empty the polluted scum of its gaols on the virgin shores of an unpeopled continent' (Whately 1832: 155). He turned to another katabatic journey, that of Aeneas in Book 6 of the *Aeneid*, in which Aeneas' father Anchises explains how souls are punished in the Underworld:

Alii panduntur inanes
Suspensi ad ventos; aliis sub gurgite vasto
Infectum eluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni
Quisque suos patimur manes: exinde per amplum
Mittimur Elysium, et pauci laeta arva tenemus.

Whately 1832: 155

Some are hung stretched out to the empty winds; from some the stain of guilt is washed away under swirling floods or burned out in fire. Each of us suffers his own spirit; then through wide Elysium are we sent, a few of us to abide in the joyous fields . . .

Aen. VI.740–4

Like Virgil, Dante and Swift before him, Francis McNamara envisioned the Underworld as a place where 'each of us suffers his own spirit'. 'A Convict's Tour to Hell' gave poetic form to Whately's conclusion, that

[t]here is no convict in New South Wales who, by his crimes, has worked a tenth part of the mischief, or by his example and instruction been half so instrumental in the diffusion of vice, as the person, whomever he may have been, and however unconscious of the evil which he was about to originate, who devised the plan of transporting convicts to New South Wales.

Whately 1832: 154–5

PART II

THEATRE – THEN AND NOW

CHAPTER 3

AGAMEMNON COMES TO THE ANTIPODES: THE ORIGINS OF STUDENT DRAMA AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Laura Ginters

In June 1886, a group of undergraduate Classics students at the University of Sydney staged *Agamemnon* in the university's Great Hall – 'the first complete Greek play to be produced in New South Wales' ('Amusements' 1886).¹ Student legend has it that *Agamemnon* was also the first play performed by the Sydney University Dramatic Society (SUDS) when it was formed several years later in 1889. In my research to untangle legend from fact, I uncovered first another mystery – an uncanny resemblance between this production and one at Oxford University in 1880 – and what was ultimately revealed was an intriguing story, encompassing the two universities, new teaching practices in the Classics in the late nineteenth century, public debate about the value of the Classics, and ultimately the foundation of student dramatic societies at each institution. The two productions offer a fascinating case study that also touches on the complex relationship between imperialism, empire and Classical Reception (see Goff 2005; Hardwick and Gillespie 2007; Bradley 2010; Hagerman 2013). In the following chapter I trace the impetus for, and reception of, these productions, and the way in which this particular Antipodean antiquity has had a lasting impact on theatre-making in Australia.

The story begins with two photographs, the first being of the production of *Agamemnon* at the University of Sydney in 1886 (Figure 3.1). In searching for further traces of 'my' *Agamemnons* in the 1880s, however, another image emerged (Figure 3.2).

This photograph is from the famous 1880 production of *Agamemnon* at Balliol College, Oxford, and these two images could easily be of the same production. The striking similarities extend to costuming choices, down to a lack of masks (common to productions of ancient Greek plays in the late nineteenth century), the arrangement of the figures, and even their backdrop: both nineteenth-century sandstone halls.

The two universities were, quite literally, a world apart, in an era when travelling between England and Australia entailed a four-month boat trip. How and why was this production replicated in this uncanny way on the other side of the world? The answer to this question lies at least partially in the fact that, as Barbara Goff reminds us, 'literature' – in this case dramatic literature – 'is at the centre of gravity of the imperial project because it offers a way to the "hearts and minds" of all imperial subjects, in metropolis or colony alike' (2005: 3), and indeed, that '[t]he history of the discipline [of Classics] has been intimately connected with the processes of empire at many levels' (2005: 6). Mark Bradley would go further, making a claim for 'a single intellectual history that



Figure 3.1 Agamemnon cast, University of Sydney, 1886. Courtesy of the University of Sydney Archives.



Figure 3.2 Agamemnon cast, Balliol College, 1880. Courtesy of the Archives of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD), University of Oxford.

merges the politics of imperialism with the evolution of classics as a discipline' (2010: 10), while C. A. Hagerman pertinently notes that empire and imperialism 'can only be understood by taking into consideration the interplay between centre and periphery'. Stressing the need to examine 'how the classics travelled in the empire' (2013: 14), he offers an insightful analysis of the ways in which a classical education was not only exported to, but also shaped experiences of, and in, the colony. That is, what we see here may be an only partially conscious, and certainly not uncomplicated, aspect of 'the imperial project'.

Australia at this time was still a colony, and while theatre had been part of the cultural life since its earliest days as a penal colony in the late eighteenth century, nineteenth-century theatres were filled with popular entertainments, rather than classical drama.² The University of Sydney, Australia's oldest university, was founded in 1852 'with a focus on the classics, sciences and mathematics, as well as "modern" subjects French, German and political thought'.³ It drew on Oxbridge traditions, but what developed was 'a new vision of reformed Oxford in the antipodes' (Horne and Sherington 2013: 377). Julia Horne and Geoffrey Sherington explain how the foundation of the first Australian universities stemmed from 'a liberal progressive belief that self-government required men to take up leadership positions [in] colonial and civic life [and] [w]ithout a local university, colonial leadership ... would become the province of the son of gentlemen educated in England's institutions of privilege' (2010: 10). There was, it seems, a dynamic tension between the desire to adopt time-honoured and time-proven educational models and curricula, and a clear sense that the university's role was *not* to exactly replicate the social and cultural structures that characterized Oxford and Cambridge, so that it was better suited to its own society and its needs. The University of Sydney was established as 'a state university, urban, secular, professional, non-residential and non-collegiate, centralised in government, controlled by a laity' (Selleck 2003: 27) and open to all on merit. Unlike Oxford University at the time, for example, it was attended by Catholics, Protestants, Presbyterians and, indeed, from the early 1880s, by women. Alongside such progressive, mildly anti-imperialist notions, however, connections back to the 'mother country' remained important, and were made concrete in the most literal of ways in the construction of the Main Quadrangle and Great Hall, modelled on the medieval Colleges of Oxford and Cambridge. One other significant example of this deference to English precedence was the fact that the University of Sydney used London-based selection committees for the appointment of its professors. Sydney recruited from, and has been described as 'shackled' to, Oxbridge colleges (Horne and Sherington 2013: 377).⁴

This tradition provides the missing link between the two productions. In early 1885, the newly appointed Professor of Classics and Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Walter Scott, stepped off the boat from England and assumed his duties at the University of Sydney at the age of twenty-nine. Professor Scott came to Sydney from Oxford University, where he had been a fellow at Merton College. In 1880, when the famous *Agamemnon* took place, he was completing his MA at Balliol College, and it seems highly likely that he would have seen the production. Others have written at length about this seminal production



Figure 3.3 Professor Walter Scott, 1893. Courtesy of the University of Sydney Archives.

(see Macintosh 2005; Hall and Macintosh 2005; Wrigley 2011), but some background here serves to set the scene for the arrival of *Agamemnon* in the Antipodes.

Live on stage: a new departure

Oxford University had had an ambivalent relationship to theatrical performances by its undergraduates in the mid-nineteenth century and the banning of student theatricals certainly had something to do with the prosecution of a few young men for taking their cross-dressing off the stage and into public, and their association, too, with a well-established gay subculture (Wrigley 2011). Theatre, then, might endanger the morals of the young men attending university. However, in 1880 when the Master of Balliol, Benjamin Jowett, was approached with a request for a performance of *Agamemnon* in its new Hall, he gave his permission – not least, as Amanda Wrigley reports, because ‘he believed that the cast of *Agamemnon* . . . contained sufficient athletes and Balliol men to avoid any scandal’ (2011: 38). Oscar Wilde would later claim the production was his idea (Ellman 1987: 452). It certainly attracted much attention, with scholars from the disciplines of Classics and Archaeology being consulted, and contemporary artists like Edward Burne-Jones, Lawrence Alma-Tadema and Frederick Leighton offering scenic and costuming suggestions. The production was such a success it went on tour to London. And while this was not the first *Agamemnon* to be produced in the United Kingdom (a month earlier Professor Fleeming Jenkin had produced it, in English, in his own private

theatre in Scotland) it was, as Fiona Macintosh has pointed out, 'the first production of a Greek tragedy in the original language to receive serious critical consideration since the Renaissance' (Macintosh 2005: 157).

Macintosh suggests there was a 'new vogue' for ancient drama in Britain in the 1880s due to 'the widening of the classical curriculum, the inclusion of women, as well as the broader developments within the professional theatre' (Macintosh 2005: 141). *Agamemnon*, she proposes, would have been of particular interest to Victorian audiences, not least because of the intense fascination with the contemporaneous, well-reported archaeological finds, including what Heinrich Schliemann proclaimed to be Agamemnon's death mask in 1876. Robert Garland also points to the contemporary perception that staging a play would enhance the audience's understandings of ancient theatre and was 'an important channel for bringing Greek civilisation to life at a time when Hellenism was enjoying a considerable vogue among Victorian aesthetes' (2004: 157–8). He noted too the particular value for deepening academic understanding of these ancient works – '[d]istinguished scholars confessed that seeing the plays on stage transformed their readings and interpretations' (2004: 160) – and this, of course, was particularly relevant for these early university productions.

The productions in Oxford and Sydney had elements in common, including the striking visual similarities in both costuming and staging, and others where they diverged, largely in terms of reception, both inside and outside the university. Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray have noted that in relation to the Classics, 'reception becomes decisive when traditions intersect or are in conflict' (2008: 5), and in this instance, we can identify both external conformity to an imperially transmitted classical tradition, *and* – through its reception – a more equivocal response to this enterprise. In this case the two productions 'shared' Walter Scott and what he represented; namely, a long-standing university tradition with a focus on Classics that had been exported to the colonies. At the same time, however, the Sydney *Agamemnon* by no means reflected a consistent, one-way transmission of culture, education and values from 'mother country' to colony. In Oxford, for example, there had been some negativity within the academy about the legitimacy and desirability of staging *Agamemnon*, reflecting the well-established hostility to dramatic activities. As Philip Carr, recalling the 1880 production, put it: '[T]here were some, indeed, of the severer sort who were disposed to regard this as a sort of illegitimate back-door to making scholarship easy, or even interesting. It seemed to rob the classics of their exclusive interest, and to place the scholar in no little danger of being lost in the crowd' (1898: 54). In Sydney, however, some dubiousness about the project was expressed *outside* the institution, linked to the relevance of staging a Greek play at all, but also explicitly for its connections to English university traditions. As one critic claimed:

How many in that audience of the *elite* last night heard aught but gibberish in the indifferently rendered stage talk. Were there twenty amongst the twelve hundred who could think in the Greek? ... It was a weak imitation of some decaying customs of the old conservative universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

'The Greek Play' 1886

The writer is perhaps instinctively articulating what Hardwick has argued; that ‘imperial power almost always operates with the complicity or active participation of élites among the colonized’ (2007: 3). From Walter Scott’s point of view, though, his devotion to the Classics and education was – perhaps surprisingly – not entirely characterized by conservatism, nor was it restricted to the cloistered world of the university, or indeed society’s ‘élite’. In his inaugural lecture, delivered in the Great Hall, he vigorously made his case for the continued vitality and importance of the Classics, especially in the emerging nation of Australia:

And of all the people in the world, we English in Australia can least afford to disregard the past. A country dating her very existence as a separate community within the century, and even now only beginning to realize the splendid possibilities before her, a country in which all faces are turned towards the future, and all brains and hands are engaged in the momentous task of laying down the lines for a career of infinite development, Australia has reason, if ever a country had, to look for guidance to the accumulated experience of past generations, and to maintain every link that helps to preserve the continuity of human progress.

Scott 1885: 22⁵

At the same time, however, he also championed the study of Philosophy, Modern Literature and Modern History – ‘a University which makes no provision for study in this department is confessedly imperfect in its organization’ (Scott 1885: 23) – believing that ‘properly taught, many subjects other than classics contributed to a liberal education’ (Philps 1988). Firmly convinced of ‘the superiority of the educated over the uneducated man’ (Scott 1885: 27), Scott’s liberal idealism saw him seeking to extend educational opportunities to those outside the university: he was not only a generous supporter of the foundation of the Women’s College, he also inaugurated the University Extension Board lectures and became President of the Toynbee Guild where ‘university men were encouraged to help working-class people to improve their lot’ (Philps 1988). A production of *Agamemnon*, then, accessible to the broader community, could be interpreted as part of this mission. Scott was so committed to the *Agamemnon* project that he even undertook to make good any financial loss – which he did, to the tune of £30, which was no small sum at the time (Thompson 1925).

The question arises, too, as to how accessible the play was for the undergraduates themselves. According to Carr, the undergraduates at Oxford University were much in favour of putting on *Agamemnon* in 1880: ‘[A]mong undergraduates ... the proposed innovation was greeted with enthusiasm. Many, hardened though they were by schools, began to read Aeschylus. In the punts on the Cherwell ... might be noticed copy after copy of the “Agamemnon” – sometimes in Greek’ (1898: 54). For Scott’s part, it is hard to imagine that this production did not also represent something of an innovation to more fully engage his students in their study of the Classics at Sydney.⁶ While Glynne Wickham has observed that ‘[t]he 1880s ... mark the end of one era and the start of another in respect of the practice of dramatic arts and attitudes to it in British academic life’

(Wickham 1977: 115), this amounted to sanctioning student drama activities, not officially incorporating Drama into any official curriculum. This production of *Agamemnon* was recognized even outside the University of Sydney, however, as serving this purpose, as the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported in 1886:

To the students the advantage of the practice [of staging this play] is very obvious, for it gives life and vitality to their study; it makes a Greek play more than a piece of difficult construction, more than a work for translation; it makes it a bit of literature and of old world live; in other words, it increases fourfold the value of the study as an instrument of culture.

The earliest classical play at the University of Sydney

Agamemnon was not the first play the University of Sydney's students had produced. In January 1868 an audience of about 700 people turned up to the Great Hall to see Terence's *Phormio* (in Latin) and, in French, Molière's *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*. Oronte was played by Edmund Barton, who was also a prize-winning Classics student and, later a barrister, Australia's first Prime Minister, and High Court judge. That evening represented a clutch of firsts: it was the first public theatrical performance at the university; the 'first Latin Play ever produced in these colonies' ('Dramatic Performance at the University' 1868); and it was done in honour of the first royal visitor to Australia, Queen Victoria's son, Prince Alfred. The *Sydney Morning Herald* declared 'the representations were eminently successful and were received with reiterated and well deserved applause', and the enthusiastic review of this 'intellectual exercise of no mean value and a very decided novelty' concluded in the hope that 'it will not be the last entertainment of the kind that will be witnessed by the public in the Great Hall of that Institution' ('Dramatic Performance at the University' 1868).

The first *Agamemnon*

It was, however, almost two decades before the university's Great Hall was transformed into the forecourt of *Agamemnon*'s palace, in 'as fair a semblance of an Attic stage as the circumstances permitted' ('The *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus' 1886).

The production attracted great interest outside the university as well. It was reported widely in interstate papers, in theatre columns, in the vice regal news and the normal news sections of papers – not least because this was the first time an ancient Greek play had been performed in full in the colony. Sydney Grammar School had, in 1884 and 1885, staged scenes from *The Frogs* and *The Clouds* as part of their end-of-school year entertainment. But this was not a case of vying for line honours; there was considerable overlap between the school students and the cast of *Agamemnon*, with the Grammar School (with Classics as a core of its curriculum) established as a 'feeder' into the



Figure 3.4 The Great Hall, 1886. Courtesy of the University of Sydney Archives.

university.⁷ In fact, not only did the young men progress from Sydney Grammar to the university, but on at least one occasion they returned to school to continue their participation in classical plays. Robert Garran (Agamemnon), for example, performed in a production of *Cyclops* at Grammar in 1887, reporting that the producer ‘needed a *monstrum immane, horrendum, ingens*, to represent Cyclops, and asked me to oblige’ (1958: 73).

Staging the play

Professor Scott oversaw the production, and was joined by Mr B. N. Jones, an experienced and well-regarded stage manager from the Gaiety Theatre, who was entrusted with ‘dramatic superintendence’. Composer Hector Maclean, who created a highly praised score for the production, and was the *chorodidiscalus*, trained the Chorus in their demanding roles. Robert Garran recalled that: ‘[i]mmense pains were taken in the design of the upper and lower stages and of the costumes and properties. The choruses were sung to special music, in what I assume to be Greek modes, composed by Hector Maclean, organist at St James’s Church’ (1958: 77). Garran’s slightly tentative assessment of Maclean’s music was echoed by some critics who felt that it obtruded ‘some unnecessary modernism into the evening’ (Fischer 1971: 27), though the author of the Department of

the Arts' annual report regarded this as a positively distinctive feature of the Sydney performance – 'there are but few precedents for original and especially adapted music for such occasions' ('University Commemoration' 1887) – and the *Herald* reviewer described Maclean as playing 'a prominent and highly successful part' in this venture, favourably detailing at some length the musical elements of the production ("The Agamemnon" at the University' 1886). Other reports also commented positively on the 'excellent orchestra under the leadership of Herr Kretschman' ('The Day's Doings' 1886), which consisted of thirty players.

Questions of 'authenticity' did preoccupy commentators who remarked approvingly that '[t]he dressing of the various characters was correct in every particular' ("The Agamemnon" at the University' 1886). The set, though simple, was effective, and, again, care had been taken to ensure that this was 'erected and decorated in a style gathered from ancient building and records' ('University Commemoration' 1887). Clytemnestra 'kindled fire on the altars' ("The Agamemnon" at the University' 1886) and, in a very modern innovation, the production was 'lit by unseen electric lights provided by the university's Engineering Department' ('University Commemoration' 1887).

The performances

After several months of rehearsal, and a well-attended and successful dress rehearsal, the production opened on Monday, 15 June 1886. In attendance, among others, were M.P. Edmund Barton (late of *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*), and Mr Justice Windeyer, the university's first graduate (with a First in Classics). Perhaps Windeyer attended with his sons Richard and William, both still at the Grammar School, and both of whom would appear in *Cyclops* the following year.⁸ Richard and William, on matriculating, immediately became student actors: Richard was a member of SUDS's inaugural Committee.

On the second night *Agamemnon* was performed 'in the presence of [the Governor] Lord and Lady Carrington' ('The Drama and Music' 1886). The audience included the elite of New South Wales society, described as 'a brilliant and fashionable audience' (A Visitor 1886). While most tickets had been sold the 'extremely inclement weather' ("The Agamemnon" at the University' 1886) reduced audiences on both nights: one wag wrote in *The Australasian* that the play had 'brought weather as miserable as if it had been bespoke for the occasion by some model science professor, to whom a Greek play delivered in Greek is supposed to be about as exhilarating a spectacle as Cardinal Moran's biretta is to the master of an Orange lodge' (Bavard 1886). This points us to some controversy played out in the newspapers prior to, and following, the production about how Classics might have been regarded within the broader university, but also more generally in relation to the play being performed in ancient Greek. The average citizen of New South Wales could hardly be reckoned to be proficient in this language – the transportation of convicts to the colony had ceased less than twenty years earlier, after all – and we can read here that parallel trace of some scepticism in the broader community about the value and significance of this exercise. This might be contrasted with the rather



Figure 3.5 'The Agamemnon of Aeschylus', *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 19 June 1886. Courtesy of Trove (National Library of Australia).

more rarified environment of the Sydney Grammar School where, as Garran reports: 'Greek was then part of the normal curriculum in the Upper School. You could side-step it by getting into the modern side, at the cost of a drop in social esteem, and the reputation among Grecians of being a duffer' (Garran 1958: 72).

Professor Scott had wisely proposed a translation of the text for this production of *Agamemnon*. His students had each undertaken to translate their own parts and Scott then polished this work and made it available to audience members. Members of the public could, when purchasing their tickets, also buy a copy of this translation in preparation for the production. The *Sydney Morning Herald* noted approvingly that with this translation, an audience member could 'follow the whole play, and be thoroughly interested in the representation as placed before him on the stage' ("The Agamemnon"

at the University' 1886). Perhaps keen to demonstrate he had not forgotten his *own* undergrad Greek, the reviewer went on to quote repeatedly from the play in the original Greek.

Not all the undergraduate performers, however, demonstrated their dedication to their subject. While this production may have been pedagogical in part (and this is a practice that continues today, as we see in John Davidson's contribution to this volume), it seems it is a universal truth that some undergraduates will always resist doing their homework. At least one member of the 1886 Chorus was clearly daunted by the effort of having to learn several hundred lines of Classical Greek. A contemporary recalled drily that 'this was a task, perhaps, beyond the power, and certainly not to the liking, of one youth, who contented himself with singing "oranges and lemons" instead of the proper Greek words'. This caused Professor Scott to remonstrate: 'Mr. Blank, if you are not more careful with your pronunciation you will spoil the effect!' (Thomson 1925). By the time of the performances, he must have taken this to heart, such that a reporter could approvingly note that '[t]he piece was excellently mounted and spiritedly played by the students, who, in addition to being letter perfect in their parts, had caught the meaning of the great author' ('The Day's Doings' 1886).

Agamemnon was played by Robert Garran who went on to become the Commonwealth Solicitor-General, and was later knighted. His trajectory through the Grammar School, then Classics and Law at the university, and on to legal practice and public service was replicated by many associated with this production (and others before and since). This points to a well-functioning system that was delivering the desired locally educated future leaders, but also a nexus between Classics and Law and, indeed, performance. It may be argued that the rhetorical skills learned benefitted these young men, not only in the classroom but on stage, in parliament and in the court room. At nearly six and a half feet tall, some speculated that it was Garran's impressive presence that led him to be cast in the role, but his Agamemnon was, apparently, 'intelligently played', as well as spectacular (A Visitor 1886). He entered the Great Hall, standing up in his war chariot, drawn by two cream-coloured ponies, with Cassandra at his side. He wore 'a resplendent helmet with a crest . . . a gorgeous *himation* embroidered with gold, boots laced very high up, and bore in his right hand a stout spear' ("The Agamemnon" at the University' 1886). Garran would become a stalwart of university drama over the next few years.

Cassandra was played by Gustav Leibius, who became a fellow lawyer, after an undergraduate career in theatre and having received the Classics Medal. Leibius attracted great praise for his portrayal of Cassandra: one critic, determined not to offer the 'doubtful compliment' of 'indiscriminate praise' to the young actors declared that they 'did not show any marked histrionic talent', with the striking exception of Leibius, who 'played the part of Cassandra in a manner that would have done credit to a professional actor. Indeed, it is not often that one has an opportunity of witnessing on any stage an impersonation marked at once by such intensity of feeling, delicacy, and self restraint' (A Visitor 1886). Another critic dwelled on the charms of Clytemnestra, played by Mr H. A. Russell:

the Queen, Clytemnestra . . . came forward, looking beautiful and dignified in a purple *himation* hanging over her *chiton* in graceful folds, and fastened with handsome *fibula* or brooches, her hair bound up in the simple becoming Grecian fashion, her feet confined in sandals . . . Mr. H. A. Russell, who played the Queen, looked the part very well . . . and pronounced these too long speeches with great vigour and energy.

“‘*The Agamemnon*’ at the University’ 1886

Although women had been admitted to the university since 1881, one of the first universities in the world to do so, none had yet been admitted to the ranks of its players, so this production maintained the traditional cross-dressing which had been of such concern to the Oxford authorities.

It was, by all accounts, a striking production, enthusiastically performed. One description of the final scene gives a graphic sense of the production: ‘The staging was very well done; the final scene, in which Clytemnestra stands brandishing her bloody axe and defying the Elders, with her paramour Aegisthus beside her, at the Palace gate, while the body of the murdered Agamemnon is visible in the background, was particularly effective’ (‘The Agamemnon of Aeschylus’ 1886). In its summary of the month’s theatrical activities around town, the *Sydney Morning Herald* declared that ‘the performance was highly satisfactory’ (‘The Drama and Music’ 1886), though it is true that a spirited exchange ‘for’ and ‘against’ the production was also carried by ‘A Philhellene’ and ‘A Philistine’ in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (‘The Agamemnon. By A Philistine’ 1886; ‘The Agamemnon. By A Philhellene’ 1886) in the days that followed.

In terms of those directly involved, we have the testimony of at least one participant to confirm its value to them as students. Garran wrote in his memoirs that the performance of *Agamemnon* was ‘one of the high-lights of my university memories’ (Garran 1958: 77), and Scott was remembered very fondly by those whom he had taught.⁹ The university for its part was proud of what had been achieved, not least because of the favourable comparisons it generated, both to the British traditions the university had emulated – ‘Gentlemen who had witnessed or taken part in similar performances at the greater universities of England have pronounced ours to be not unequal in any way’ (‘University Commemoration’ 1887) – but also to the value of perpetuating Classics in the face of some indifference or even opposition in the broader community, or possibly in the university itself:

This successful performance of a Greek tragedy by our students is a prominent university event, showing that the classics still hold a good place in the struggles with the other branches of education, and that even much-neglected Greek is able to come handsomely to the front in the University of Sydney.

‘University Commemoration’ 1887

‘The performance’, declared the Department of Arts in its annual report, ‘proved in every way a decided success’ (‘University Commemoration’ 1887).

While the Oxford and Sydney *Agamemnons* do resemble one another closely, we can also detect a more complex relationship through which are played out questions relating to the British imperial project, and (at least traces of) nascent Australian resistance to it. Of significance here is the positioning of the Antipodean university within its own society, particularly concerns regarding the curriculum and its inherited, traditionally unquestioned focus on the Classics as a core of that curriculum.

From *Agamemnon* to a dramatic society

There is one more very significant thing the Oxford and Sydney productions of *Agamemnon* shared. In England, the 1880 *Agamemnon*, a play performed by undergraduates, and officially sanctioned by university authorities, sowed the seeds for the formation of the Oxford University Dramatic Society (OUDS) in 1884. Benjamin Jowett, then the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, had endorsed an existing drama group, the Philothespians, in 1883, on the proviso that ‘they must act only Shakespeare, and the female parts must be taken by lady amateurs’ (Carpenter 1985: 27), and the following year OUDS was born. And in Sydney, likewise, the success of *Agamemnon* laid the foundations for its own dramatic society, also via Shakespeare. The year after *Agamemnon* was produced the Student Union began a programme of readings of Shakespeare plays, one per term in place of one of the usual Friday night Union debates. These took place at a commercial theatre in the city, St James’ Hall, and were attended not only by senior university staff, but also by ‘a very large gathering of ladies and gentlemen’ (‘Shakespearian Reading. The Tempest’ 1889). Women, newly admitted to Union debates, were also now included in the casts, and many participants from *Agamemnon* – like Garran, Leibius, Russell and others – performed in these readings. It seems very likely that this series of successful readings provided the impetus for the official founding of SUDS in late 1889, with a Mr L. Armstrong (who had also been on the Committee for *Agamemnon*) as its Chair.

I noted earlier that it has become an apocryphal part of SUDS’s own history that *Agamemnon* was the first play performed by SUDS when it was formed in 1889. This is unlikely as SUDS was only officially constituted at the very end of that year, but sources disagree on what was SUDS’s first production. In addition to *Agamemnon*, claims have variously been made for Sheridan’s *The Rivals*, and Byron’s *Blow for Blow*. In fact, what was almost certainly SUDS’s inaugural production was a double bill of light farces, *Tweedleton’s Tailcoat* and *Done on Both Sides*, performed in April 1890. It seems, then, SUDS officially began its life with comedy, rather than tragedy, but *Agamemnon* had provided the catalyst for the formation of the Society, which is now the oldest theatre company in the country, and is one of the oldest student dramatic societies in the world. The 1886 production of *Agamemnon* effectively set up SUDS’s future, a student-run company that would offer exciting opportunities for its undergrads, including providing many with their introduction to a later professional career in the theatre.¹⁰ It would engage with the broader community outside the university, and, indeed, on many occasions subsequently its offerings would be Australian, or even sometimes world, premieres.

Antipodean Antiquities

Agamemnon has become SUDS's founding story, and the play has been woven through student drama activities since then. In 1952, this was the play selected by students from the Classics Society as their contribution to the university's International Festival of Music and Drama, in celebration of the centenary of the first students' admission to the university. Just as in 1886, the play was performed in Classical Greek, and again Law students were enthusiastic participants: one Roderick Meagher played Aegisthus. He would later become Challis Professor in Law at the university and a rather notorious New South Wales Supreme Court judge. Women were included in the cast in this production, among them Freda Lesslie (Clytemnestra), who worked as a professional actress after graduation.



Figure 3.6 Agamemnon (Robert Maddox) enters in his chariot, greeted by Clytemnestra (Freda Lesslie). Sydney University Classical Society, Wallace Theatre, 1952. Courtesy of the William Ritchie Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama in New South Wales, Centre for Classical and Near Eastern Studies of Australia (CCANESA), University of Sydney.



Figure 3.7 Clytemnestra (Freda Lesslie) stands over the body of Agamemnon (Robert Maddox), with Aegisthus (Roderick Meagher) looking on, Sydney University Classical Society, Wallace Theatre, 1952. Courtesy of the William Ritchie Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama in New South Wales, CCANESA, University of Sydney.

Just as the late nineteenth-century British interest in ancient drama worked in tandem with the contemporary fascination with the archaeological excavations being undertaken at the time (see Hall and Macintosh 2005), this production had its own parallel in the discovery the previous week at Mycenae of a circle of tombs ‘near one already known to be that of Clytemnestra, wife of Agamemnon’ (‘Tombs may throw light on Homer’s *Iliad*’ 1952). The journalist went on to note that ‘it is now hoped to find the tomb of Aegisthus’. One might readily imagine that these discoveries, expected to ‘provide new evidence that Homer’s epic *Iliad* contains more fact than fiction’, would have tantalized audiences with their apparent proximity to the ancient characters portrayed before them.

Less than a decade later the play had another outing, performed in English for the first time in Louis MacNeice’s blank verse translation in 1964. Another novelty was its direction by Germaine Greer, who also played Clytemnestra. Two other roles in this play reading were taken by undergrads Arthur Dignam (Agamemnon) and John Gaden (Chorus Leader), both of whom later became well-known stalwarts of the professional Sydney theatre scene. Gaden, some fifty years later, is still performing regularly on stage.

In 2015, to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the society’s first production, SUDS staged *Agamemnon* in the Great Hall once more. The production was directed by Pierce Wilcox and designed by Emily Barr. Poet and Classics scholar Ann Carson’s contemporary translation was used, and there was no attempt whatsoever to recreate an ‘Attic stage’: a pile of car tyres comprised the set. Elaborate, non-representative costumes, startling white make-up and lurid wigs made for an arresting performance, accompanied by harp,



Figure 3.8 Molly Trevaskis, Georgia Britt, Werrdan Khoury (at rear); Jordan Stam, Hannah Cox, Kendra Murphy, Ian Ferrington, Bridget Haberecht, Xavier Holt (at front), *Agamemnon*, Sydney University Dramatic Society (SUDS), Great Hall, University of Sydney, 2015. © Victoria Baldwin.



Figure 3.9 Werrdan Khoury and Victoria Zerbst, *Agamemnon*, SUDS, Great Hall, University of Sydney, 2015. © Victoria Baldwin.



Figure 3.10 Xavier Holt, *Agamemnon*, SUDS, Great Hall, University of Sydney, 2015. © Victoria Baldwin.

piano and bongos. Walter Scott would have recognized the venue, unchanged in 130 years, even if not instantly the *dramatis personae* in this non-traditional staging. Even in its new clothes, the play continues to function as a touchstone for the students, connecting them back not only to the history of their drama society and indeed their university and its forebears, but also to the longer history of reception of this ancient work.

CHAPTER 4

SALAMIS AND GALLIPOLI: THE CAMPAIGNS OF PHILLIP MANN

John Davidson

Born in the United Kingdom in 1942, Phillip Mann established the first Drama Studies position at a New Zealand University in 1970, at Victoria University of Wellington, retiring from the position of Professor of Drama in 1998 to concentrate on other projects, especially his growing corpus of science fiction novels. Always interested in the Classics from the time of Latin studies at secondary school, he turned primarily to Roman history for inspiration for some key concepts in the novels, while using Greek tragedy and comedy extensively as teaching tools and theatrical training during his time at Victoria. This discussion considers both his work as a novelist as well as his creative approach to ancient Greek plays, which he sometimes adapted significantly to suit the times, and the contexts of performance. The radical difference in his approach to the genres of novel and drama testifies to his creative versatility as well as to his vision of the ancient world as a storehouse of material with almost frightening applicability to many of the events and problems of the modern world.¹

Mann was involved in professional theatre from the time of his arrival in Wellington, directing the now legendary *Bacchae* for Downstage Theatre in 1970, which included a young Sam Neill in the role of King Pentheus. The production inspired a response from New Zealand poet Alistair Te Ariki Campbell, himself a Classical scholar, entitled 'On seeing Phillip Mann's Production of *The Bacchae*' (1972: 85). Mann later collaborated with Tolis Papazoglou in 1997 in translating and directing *Agamemnon* for Downstage Theatre, by that time in a permanent home in the Hannah Playhouse.² It is in the university context, however, that his creative re-imagining of Greek plays can be seen most clearly. Perhaps the best example of this is *They Shall Not Grow Old*, described as 'a dramatic exploration based on the *Persae* by Aeschylus', and presented by DRAM301 Company in 1997.³ In the short programme leaflet, after the cast and crew lists, there is a comment on the parallels between Xerxes' Greek campaign of 480 BC and the Gallipoli event, pointing not only to the adjacent theatres of war, but also to the great loss of life resulting from two expeditions led by 'ambitious, ineffectual commanders' (Mann 1997: unpagd). It is also noted that the focus of the 'exploration' is the grief of the women left behind, which is part of 'a universal and timeless grief felt by women all over the world at all times, who have lost their men to war' (Mann 1997: unpagd). Maps of the relevant areas at the time of the Persian Wars and the Gallipoli campaign⁴ are also provided, along with a brief note on Aeschylus' play and Mann's rationale for performing Greek tragedy – the 'bigness' of the themes found in the plays and 'the wonderful moments of dramatic spectacle and surprise on which they depend' (Mann 1997: unpagd). Aeschylus' *Persae* well illustrates this.⁵

Antipodean Antiquities

Mann comments also that it is the theatrical vitality which, in a presentation of the suffering and destruction caused by war, may prevent the ‘numbing [of] an audience’s sensibility rather than quickening it’ (Mann 1997: unpagged), a possible consequence of the constant diet of such material on television. He goes on to say: ‘I have always felt that the safest way to approach the Greek classics is to regard them as among our most avant-garde works. The very antiquity of the plays challenges us to discover new and refreshing ways to reveal them to modern audiences’ (Mann 1997: unpagged). Crediting Aeschylus with ‘risk taking’, he promises that the risk in *They Shall Not Grow Old* is playing with time, ‘gliding from past to present and back again as the needs of the story dictate’ (Mann 1997: unpagged). This is precisely what happens, and with notable success, the position of the Anzacs, of course, being analogous to that of Xerxes’ army in that both were invaders.

Mann’s script is an abbreviated version of the Aeschylean drama, offered in a free translation, while closely following the basic outline of the original. As the Chorus enters, the first significant innovation becomes apparent, as the audience sees not male elders, but women of Persia. They recall the departure of the army and express their concern at the passing of time without any news. We are exclusively in Persia in the first and last sections of this *parodos* equivalent. However, in the central section the interweaving of ancient eastern and twentieth-century Antipodean concerns becomes manifest. It begins:

From Susa, Ecbatana;
From ancient Kissian ramparts,
From every family door,
Captains of Persian valour, servants of the King;
Amistres, Artaphernes,
Barry, Buddle, Burke,
From frosty Southland goldfields,
From dank North Island bush,
All the boys of Mitcheltown, press on to their goal;
Fearsome Artembares, whose chariot ran with blood
Doverwell, McGareth, those brave young riflemen;
The fearless Pharandarces.

Mann 1997: 2

The stage directions for the entry of Atossa indicate that she is initially hidden behind a ‘wall’ of fabric supported on poles carried by attendants. This highlights the emphasis on textiles and clothing, which is a leading theme in Aeschylus’ play, and which Mann develops innovatively. When revealed, Atossa delivers a shortened version of her dream, including the robe tearing, and the omen of the eagle and hawk, as well as offering the information about Athens in response to the Chorus’ questions. The stage is set for the arrival of the Messenger.

The Chorus’ response to the Messenger’s initial announcement of the disaster at Salamis already picks up the modern parallel: ‘In vain our arrows and bayonets too’

(Mann 1997: 6). This is then amplified in the message narrative itself (again an abbreviated version of the original) that includes lines such as:

A spear struck Dadaces, Captain of a thousand men
 And with a leap he hurled himself from the ship.
 Jones, a true subject of the King, under the hot sun, reddened
 the sea with his life blood.
 Three more, Borthwick, Nelson and Newman
 Struck down by peppering gunfire
 As they crawled up cliff and ridge.

Mann 1997: 7

The description is then varied by having a Xerxes figure, wearing military dress, appear on the gallery to address, in turn, the captains of the Persian fleet and then, in the persona of General Hamilton (1853–1947),⁶ the Anzacs about to make landing. His words are interspersed with those of a female lecturer at ground level ‘wearing smart modern clothes’ (Mann 1997: 8) who gives a chilling historical account of the ill-fated Gallipoli expedition. The Xerxes/General Hamilton figure is then hidden behind a curtain, but the lecturer remains, at one point intruding on the conversation between the Messenger and Atossa to describe further horrors of the Anzac attack.

Following the choral lament in Persian guise, there are scenes first of a young mother, and then a bride-to-be, receiving their telegram and responding accordingly. A further Persian lament heralds a catalogue of the names of the fallen, Persian and New Zealand once more interleaved. A father is then seen eulogizing the fallen at Gallipoli and elevating the campaign to heroic status, concluding with the words:

The first landing on Gallipoli is now recognised as the supreme exploit of the British infantry in the whole of its history. Probably there were never such resourceful, fearless fighters as the splendid Australians and New Zealanders. Troy, across the strait, never echoed to the feet of such heroes.

Mann 1997: 12⁷

During this speech and continuing after it is concluded, a waiata (a blanket term for Māori song) is performed softly, the words for which, with both English translation and some explanatory notes, can be found in the programme leaflet, and also at the end of the script.

Atossa’s entry to participate in the summoning of the Ghost of Darius is notable for her costuming in a 1915 evening dress, echoing the gown she wore at her first appearance. Darius himself is revealed as a general with many medals who did not die in battle but at the end of a distinguished military career. He speaks of both Salamis and Gallipoli and predicts Plataea. The Chorus’ nostalgic recollection of the once prosperous Persia under Darius is interrupted by the arrival of Xerxes in torn clothing, with the Chorus becoming the host of the dead and gradually surrounding him. In the lament, he admits

the loss of Persian and New Zealand individuals alike. His last words consist of the Anzac tribute, excerpted from Laurence Binyon's poem, 'For the Fallen' (1914): 'They shall not grow old ...'.

It might be thought that this intermingling of Persian and Anzac would come across as forced and artificial. However, having been present at one of the performances, I can confirm that this was not the case. Indeed, the presentation was both a triumph of theatre and a moving experience. It seemed totally natural. Of course, its secret lay in the venue, an intimate studio theatre, and in the fact that virtually all the members of cast and audience, both Māori and Pākehā (non-Māori), had a significant emotional connection with the Gallipoli campaign. It is thus fair to say that this was an example of the Reception of Greek drama that would not work so effectively in another type of theatre in, say, the United Kingdom or the United States. Nor would a publication of the script convey the full weight of Mann's imaginative response to an ancient drama.⁸

Also in 1997, Mann produced an adaptation of Euripides' tragedy *The Trojan Women* under the auspices of the production company 'Dionysos O Aotearoa', chosen by theatre set designer Tolis Papazoglou to highlight the Greek and Māori elements of the text. The approach here is somewhat different, in that there is no modern parallel as such worked into the text, which is again an abbreviated version of the original following its basic outline closely. The innovation this time is to be found in the use of a considerable amount of modern Greek and, even more extensively, Māori language.⁹ The audience members are welcomed into the theatre space by the assembled actors performing a karanga ('summoning') in English, Greek and Māori, which includes the assurance that a play written more than 2,000 years ago still conveys deep meaning for the contemporary world. The audience is invited to share in the experience of a drama interpreted through song and dance employing the resources of the three languages.

Euripides' *prologos*, featuring Poseidon and Athene, is omitted, the action commences with the Chorus taking their place with Hecuba. Following an ululation in Greek and Māori, Hecuba and the Chorus exchange short sung lines in the three languages in alternation. This pattern of alternating languages is repeated throughout the play. When Hecuba begins to speak, the Chorus sings a waiata tangi ('lament') and a Greek *kalosorisma* ('welcome').

The first exchange between Hecuba and Talthybius is in English, broken only by a response in Māori from Hecuba after hearing of the allocation of Andromache to the son of Achilles. Cassandra's following epithalamium at her entry is the section that is furthest away from Euripides' text. After her rationalizing prophecies and farewell, significantly reduced in length, there are responses from the Chorus in the three languages in alternation, before the Chorus sings a truncated version of the famous first *stasimon* recalling the sack of the city, partly in Māori, before continuing the description in alternating spoken lines of English.

Andromache's scene with Hecuba contains some Māori, and the Chorus begins a waiata tangi as Talthybius enters to fetch Astyanax. The exchange between Andromache and Talthybius finds her moving into Māori at times and the Herald using some Greek, and once Astyanax is taken, the choral *stasimon* equivalent is again laced with Māori. The

entry of Menelaus and the famous *agōn* between Helen and Hecuba is in English, though Menelaus does speak a small amount of Greek to Helen. The Chorus' response to the exit of Helen and Menelaus is impassioned Māori, and there is a Māori lament at the end of Hecuba's address to the corpse of Astyanax after Talthybius has re-entered with it. After the order to set fire to Troy is given, the final part of the play is sung mainly in English and Māori, though with some Greek as well. The play's last words are in Māori, and are said twice:

Kei ngā Atua, whakarongo mai ki tēnei kanga
 Nāku i karanga kia yao iho ki tye hunga,
 e whakaaro ana ki te kāwhaki i ahau i taku whenua nui

There are typing errors in this less than perfect Māori, and a roughly approximate English version is sandwiched in-between:

Listen you Gods to the curse I call down on
 The men who now take me away from my shore.

Mann undated: unpaginated

What this version of Euripides reveals, even more than in the case of *They Shall Not Grow Old*, is the great potential for the use of Māori in the sung sections of a Greek tragedy, a feature that 'roots' this ancient dramatic form, as it were, in the 'soil' of New Zealand. The modern Greek, at the same time, taps into the culture of Greece that in some respects shows a consistent tradition stretching from ancient times to the present day. In this instance, in his Reception of Greek drama, Mann has identified and capitalized on the potential of the Indigenous culture to offer a heightened dimension to a version of Euripides appropriate to New Zealand, and also on the potential of the Greek diaspora.

Mann's inclusion of Māori song elements is especially important. Working in counterpoint to the modern Greek, it highlights the similarity between a living culture of New Zealand, particularly in terms of funeral lament protocol, and the tradition of an entirely different culture that has found its way from the time of composition of the Greek tragic corpus down to the present day. Moreover, Mann is a real innovator here. Classical Reception in New Zealand had generally been realized in creative works written in English by Pākehā authors and then discussed by scholars in the context of the western academic tradition. A small number of Māori and other Polynesian authors writing in English had drawn on classical sources to a limited extent from the 1950s onwards, but in the last few decades this phenomenon has been further developed. Only recently, however, has academic scholarship begun to take notice of this (Perris 2013 and 2016). In addition, the New York- and Athens-based performing arts company Elliniko Theatre is planning to stage a work entitled *Maori Bacchae* in the near future,¹⁰ which interestingly has a strong Greek connection on account of the interaction between Māori soldiers and local inhabitants in the Battle of Crete in World War II. Tolis Papazoglou, Mann's collaborator in 1997, is responsible for the stage design for Elliniko Theatre's production.

As a footnote to this discussion, mention should be made of *Cinna The Poet*, which is the convenient short title of *The Tragic Consequences of the Assassination of Julius Caesar, as Devised and Presented by Cinna The Poet*.¹¹ This collaborative creation from 2005 (with text revised in 2013) involved students from the Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama course at Victoria University of Wellington and was masterminded by Mann, who wrote some of the fifteen scenes himself as well as taking care of the structure and design of the work as a whole. It belongs more in the orbit of the Reception of Shakespeare rather than of Classics, because its starting point is the bard's *Julius Caesar*. At the same time, it can be seen as a response to the concept of Rome itself. In a way, it is like a play such as Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz And Guildenstern Are Dead*, in that it takes a minor character from a Shakespearean play and brings him to the forefront of attention. It goes much further than the Stoppard work, however. After Cinna is murdered by the mob at the start of the play, he is brought back to life to comment on and at times participate in the action under various guises. He is like a puppet-master, in a sense, except that his attempts to manipulate the course of history are naturally doomed to failure. Along the way, passages from Shakespeare's text are interleaved with entirely new scenes, which comment on aspects of Roman life including Stoicism, rhetoric, the role of women and the circumstances of the conspiracy against Julius Caesar. Shakespeare's speeches are often interrupted too by comments from one or more of the characters. At the same time, there are clear references to 'the dark arts of politics' (Mann 2013: unpagged) in the contemporary world. It makes a useful transition to the second string in Mann's Reception bow.

We have noted Mann's involvement in the writing of science fiction novels. He has, in fact, achieved international recognition in this area, with works such as *Wulfsyarn: A Mosaic* (1988) and *The Disestablishment of Paradise* (2013). A thorough examination of his Reception of the Classics in this other context is not possible here, and so our attention is confined to the tetralogy *A Land Fit for Heroes*, which consists of *Escape to the Wild Woods* (1993), *Stand Alone Stan* (1994), *The Dragon Wakes* (1995), and *The Burning Forest* (1996). The setting is a parallel world 'displaced from our own by a mere twelve seconds' (the quotation is found on page 7 of the quasi-introduction in each of the four volumes of the tetralogy), based on the concept that the Roman Empire never fell to the barbarians, but that the Romans conquered the entire world, including Australasia. Mann explores what such a world might look like, with the focus almost exclusively on Britannia, a relatively peaceful corner of the world empire, at a time approximately equivalent to the late twentieth century.

The details of the story need not delay us. Of more importance is the way in which Mann imagines this alternative Roman empire and what he imports into it from the Roman empire of history and from the modern world as we know it. Mann's latter-day Roman society in Britannia consists of a ruling elite based in urban centres dotted throughout the country, chief of which is Eburacum, a choice no doubt reflecting the author's roots in Yorkshire. There is secondly a class of 'citizens', presumably the 'contemporary' Britons, who people the trades and industries, while the security of the system is in the hands of the soldiers who comprise the third stratum. Outside the urban

centres are vast stretches of dense forest within which live the 'Woodlanders', descendants of the earliest pre-Roman population, who represent a kind of idealization of Celtic pre-history. These people live in a network of villages and have made their own modest technological advances, while enjoying a simple life. They have only marginal association with the Romans and little interest in them, the Romans for their part generally leaving them alone unless they are seen to pose a threat or hindrance to developmental projects.

What is immediately noticeable is the lack of a 'slave' class as such. Of course, the ruling Romans have attendants to cater for their every need, and the 'citizens' are certainly subservient, but Mann seems to have softened to this extent the face of what was the backbone of the historical Roman economy. He has also, in response to the modern western experience, introduced a degree of gender equality into his new world, both Roman (including 'Amazon' combatants competing with success in the gladiatorial games) and Woodland, though ultimate political power in the Roman domain remains firmly in the hands of men. An exception here, though, is Calpurnia Gallica, who is said to have outlived four husbands with scarcely more than a whisper being uttered about possible foul play. One is reminded of certain lively women from imperial Rome. And the unfortunate demise through what was clearly a deliberate poisoning of the 'puppet' Praefectus Comitum of Britannia when being entertained by the Emperor could easily have been described in Roman historiographical annals.

Another leading characteristic of historical Roman civilization that is noticeably lacking is the system of public baths; nor do aqueducts make an appearance. However, this lack is more than compensated for by features such as the road network. Roman roads have always been one of the defining aspects of the civilization, ensuring the movement of goods and armies as well as facilitating communication, and serving as a lasting tribute to Roman engineering capabilities. In Mann's new world, Roman technology has progressed to the extent that a system of 'sky roads', driven by magnetic forces and operating just above the level of the forest's trees, enable vehicles to move at some speed between urban centres and the private retreats of the ruling classes.

An even more imaginative revisioning has been given to the gladiatorial games, another icon of historical Rome in the popular imagination. Brutal contests are fought beneath a giant Battle Dome. These include struggles, often to the death, between members of the Roman nobility themselves, there being intense rivalry among the leading families. The younger members undergo a rigorous training in the Marcus Aurelius Academy, an ironic and perverse version of West Point or similar, and many end up as corpses after chariot contests that involve attempts to eject one another from his or her vehicle or, for the graduates of a course of training of several years' duration, a full-scale battle. The idea of Romans killing one another in the arena seems to be, in Mann's concept, a formalized or ritual form of the internecine strife among noble families in historical Rome. The senior family members also engage in duels, to the death in some cases, driving giant mechanical monsters with lethal killing power. Some of the combatants have read their Roman history, as indeed has Mann, there being on one occasion a replication of the contest between the Horatii and Curatii. There are also, of course, tortures and massacres of convicted 'criminals'.

Mann has clearly identified brutality and ruthlessness, as well as high efficiency and organizational genius, in Roman culture, and shows how these traits might have gone on developing over a further span of centuries. Among the very few reviewers of any volumes of the tetralogy, which have rather mysteriously flown under the critical radar, David Groves comments that Mann's vision is of a society that has 'a fabulous technology but no theoretical science – it lacks consciousness. It is thus locked into a permanent status quo, reaffirmed through brutal sports' (1995: unpagged). The military arm of the state also acts quickly and without mercy when brought into action, having no compunction in wiping out Woodland villages when the occasion demands it. Special assault troops, armed with types of firearms, can descend from sky craft at any time to carry out reprisals at the hint of rebellion. 'Criminal' elements from the Woodlanders and from the 'citizen' class, indeed anyone acting against the establishment or even voicing dissent, can be sent to the Caligula Detention and Punishment Camp modelled on Nazi concentration camps, with brutal guards. Occasionally the residents of the centre are sent to the Battle Dome to be exterminated for the gratification of the crowd of spectators. There are clear reflections of modern totalitarian societies.

Another standard feature of the historical Roman Empire, as absorbed in the popular modern imagination, is feasting and debauchery. Mann provides plenty of that for the ruling Romans. Lavish entertainment is the order of the day, with normalized 'rites' of eating and vomiting. A similar level of extravagance is a feature of public spectacles in honour of special events, such as a visit of the Emperor, with breathtaking feats on the part of performers, aided by advanced technology. In this world, Christianity has never progressed beyond the status of a minor sect. A sacrifice to Mithras initiates the 'games' in the Battle Dome, and token reverence is paid to Jupiter and the Olympian pantheon on formal occasions. The essence of spirituality, however, is found among the Woodlanders, as might perhaps be expected and, as the tetralogy advances, this becomes an increasingly dominant theme, leading into a developing environment of fantasy and fairy tale. The natural world and the spirits at its heart are set off against the 'rational', materialistic world of the ruling urban Romans, a polarized conflict closely resembling that which has become increasingly highlighted in our own age between environmental concerns and materialistic values.

As in the historical Roman world, the arts are not entirely ignored. Indeed, a renegade Roman with a price on his head, given the name Roscius, maintains a network of scholars across the Empire as a subculture within the predominantly military state, running an academy with an extensive library in a secret location. This is dedicated to philosophical and educational theorizing, the free exchange of ideas, and the investigation of gender relations and 'truths' (both historical and contemporary) suppressed by the authorities. Shades of a modern liberal arts college! In a nice touch, when Roscius is captured and condemned to death, he is taken to Rome and entertained by the Emperor before being slipped hemlock to drink and going one better than Socrates in his epitaph: 'No debts' (Mann 1996: 113).

Roscius is not alone in his knowledge of 'ancient' history and literature, as references are made to important leaders and artists of the 'distant past', and snatches of Latin are

put in the mouth of various characters along with quotations from writers such as Seneca. Music is mainly confined to the domain of the Woodlanders and has a strongly 'Celtic' flavour, though one rather cultured Roman leader (from Hibernia!) recalls Achilles in his skill on a stringed instrument, and the supreme musical exponent of the forests shows traces of the Homeric bard, as well as being able to attract the natural world as Orpheus does in mythology.

The past is also kept alive in the names of the leading Roman players. Apart from those already mentioned, the most significant is the tough Marcus Augustus Ulysses, patriarch of a family engaged in a constant struggle for pre-eminence in Britannia with the Caesar family. Most interesting of all, however, is the sinister and megalomaniacal figure of Lucius Prometheus Petronius who, after manoeuvring his way into the position of Praefectus Comitum of Gallia, aspires to and then seizes the imperial crown in Rome. In this figure, we can see an aggregate of vices associated in the popular mind with a range of historical Roman emperors, most predominantly Nero. He prefers to be called Trimalchio, and the extravagance of his own eating and drinking, not to mention the lavish scale of his dinner entertainment, is most apt for a 'Petronius'. Mann is presumably indulging his sense of humour in making Lucius another of his names, when we remember the title character of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, which at an early period became popularly known as *The Golden Ass*. The significance of the other name Prometheus will become clear below.

While Britannia at the start of the tetralogy, as we have seen, is a comparatively peaceful and secure part of the Roman empire, there are problems elsewhere in the world, and one gets the feeling that this long-lasting global phenomenon may be on the brink of collapse. Thus, mention is made of a full-scale rebellion in a land called Aotearoa (the Māori name for New Zealand), initiated by the warrior chief Te Rauparaha.¹² Moreover, across the sea in 'the vast flat Southern Continent' (Mann 1993: 156) several legions have been lost in the arid interior and the few survivors have struggled back with stories of black, dancing men. In Tibet, an entire legion has deserted and become pacifist. And so on in Africa and 'the great Western Continent'.

The development of the narrative brings trouble to Britannia itself, which the Emperor decides to punish for having escaped a pestilence that has decimated livestock on the European mainland. He plans to burn all its forests and establish sheep farms. At this point we see conclusively that the blended picture of historical Rome and the Romans of this imagined modern world (which possesses coffee, cigarettes, a telephone equivalent network and a bridge linking Britannia and Gallia) has become very much a metaphor for the destructive tendencies and potential of the 'real' modern world, including the scourge of deforestation. As Groves (1995: unpagged) notes: 'With a jolt we find ourselves [i.e. in New Zealand] facing a version of our own history – the massive deforestation and burnoffs . . . , the erosion, the carcasses and bales sent to Mother England. But the trees to be burnt are not totara, rata, rimu, matai . . . '

Shipments of a highly flammable chemical, suspiciously like napalm, are made to Britannia. After some misfiring occurs at the test site, the stage is set for the first stage of the great burn-off, with the Emperor seated in state to watch proceedings. Unfortunately, the forces unleashed prove much more disastrous than anticipated, and the result is a

cross between the detonation of nuclear bombs and the eruption of a massive volcano. The horrendous destruction of land and life (eventually including that of the Emperor himself) is a chilling warning about the possible consequences of human ambition and greed, allied with technological capability.

The tetralogy is a fascinating example of the Reception of the 'idea' of Rome as applied to our own world. An overall assessment of the work is far from easy, however. Readers with an interest in both fantasy and Roman history will find much to satisfy them. Readers with an interest in only one or the other of these elements may be less enthusiastic, while a 'general reader' with little or no background in either may well be totally bemused and not last the distance or even embark on the journey. In terms of Classical Reception as such, a stumbling block might well be the increasing appearance of fantasy as the tetralogy progresses. It is one thing to accept the presence of such features as 'modernized' Roman skyways and gladiatorial contests, but quite another to enter the world of Woodland spirits and supernatural incidents. The first novel is largely set in the 'new' Roman world and therefore probably of most value to students of antiquity. Once the young Roman, who is in a sense the 'hero' of the whole work, is forced to flee outside the limits of 'civilization' and adopt the ways of the woods, there is an important shift of emphasis, as the two worlds clash. However, what the work clearly demonstrates is how issues of today can be raised and critiqued through the lens of Classical Reception.

As in the case of Mann's tetralogy, a number of other recent novels include elements of the ancient Mediterranean world, including Rome, in the fantasy worlds that they portray, perhaps the best known of these being Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy (2008–10). There are significant differences, however, given for a start that Collins' work belongs to the young adult fiction genre. Moreover, its setting is a dystopic futuristic America, as opposed to Mann's Roman province of Britannia.

There are, admittedly, points of similarity. Thus, Collins names her country Panem, evoking Juvenal's famous phrase *panem et circenses* (to which specific reference is made in the third book), which ties in with the concept of fighting to the death in an extensive 'arena' environment (albeit with a different participant pool and for the benefit of a TV audience), reminiscent of Mann's Battle Dome. Then too, the depiction of survival skills in a wilderness beyond the bounds of civilization is similar, not to mention the cruelty and oppression of a ruling class in their wealthy city, appropriately named the Capitol.

In addition, in the very exploitative Americanism of the setting, we come close to Mann's critique of the abuses of militarism and of a technology that violates the natural world, both associated especially in some minds with modern America. However, Collins' flimsy veneer of *Romanitas*, constructed through such means as, for example, the use of Roman names for many of the characters, the throwaway mention of ceremonial chariots and a class of unfortunates labelled *Avox* because their tongues have been cut out as a punishment, does not even come close to Mann's carefully crafted and detailed portrayal of a dystopic Roman world. There is indeed no real engagement that could justify the classification of Collins' work as a serious contribution to the Reception of ancient Rome.¹³

Let us return to Mann. In the final analysis, however one views *A Land Fit for Heroes*, it is possible to see, across the extent of his work, a most original chapter in the story of

Classical Reception in New Zealand. He draws on a defining episode in the history of the country, bringing it alongside a similarly defining episode in Greek history, as immortalized in literary form by Aeschylus,¹⁴ in order to highlight the universal destruction and grief caused by war. In addition, he turns to the rich Indigenous cultural tradition of the country, as a means of adding a further dimension to a Euripidean exploration of the suffering caused by war, as well as infusing it with colours of the contemporary Greek tradition. Finally, he turns the spotlight on Rome and what it can remind us of in some of the dangerous forces and tendencies of the modern, global world in which we live as well some of its possibly redeeming features. Although he has said that he did not have Māori in mind when creating his Woodlanders, nor the colonial British when delineating the abusive power of the Romans, he acknowledges that these parallels could well be drawn by contemporary readers. In any case, in the fields of both drama and fiction, he has been a trailblazer.

CHAPTER 5

WESLEY ENOCH'S *BLACK MEDEA*

Michael Ewans and Marguerite Johnson

Wesley Enoch has had a versatile and active artistic career. At the time of writing in 2018 he is the Director of the Sydney Festival, and he has previously been Artistic Director of four theatre companies, including a term at Queensland Theatre Company (2010–15). He has also directed many plays for the major companies in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, and for indigenous companies. He has worked as director and deviser on many projects for young people. A directing triumph was the 2014 joint Queensland Theatre Company and Sydney Festival production of Tom Wright's *Black Diggers*.

Enoch's first play was *The 7 Stages of Grieving*, co-written in 1995 with its solo performer, Deborah Mailman, for the company Kooemba Jdarra, of which Enoch was then Artistic Director. The play combines true stories and fiction to form a moving evocation of the suffering of Aboriginal Australians over the seven stages of Dreaming, Invasion, Genocide, Protection, Assimilation, Self-Determination, and Reconciliation. It subsequently transferred to a production at the Sydney Theatre Company, and toured extensively around Australia. While also working actively as a director, he subsequently wrote two further plays, *A Life of Grace and Piety* (1998) for Kooemba Jdarra, and *The Sunshine Club: A Very Black Musical* (1999), with music by John Rogers, for the Queensland Theatre Company.¹ Enoch then turned in 2000 to the first version of his next play, *Black Medea*:

I was trying to mix the classical repertoire with the ability to tell contemporary stories. The power of a classic is that it can survive generations of interpretation and still be relevant to a modern time. Issues of love, violence, loyalty and betrayal are universal themes ... I felt that Aboriginal theatre must tackle big issues and find a depth of expression and spirit, and the classics was a way of doing it.

Author's Note 2007a: 59

Enoch's commitment to writing and directing indigenous theatre that tackles the big issues reflects his heritage and identity as a Noonuccal Nuugi man from Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island).² Yet, as is evident in his words quoted above, Enoch is not artistically restricted by his commitment to dramatic representations of indigenous lives and politics. As a playwright who has experimented with the traditions of the (western) canon to explore myriad experiences of First Nation Australians, Enoch challenged the stereotypes sometimes associated with indigenous practitioners. Alison Croggon (2010: 59), for example, picks up on Enoch's (apparently) unexpected imperatives in *Black Medea*, which challenged some theatre critics: '[he] provoked some (white) commentators

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to claim that by appropriating classical Greek drama, Enoch was over-reaching himself: for them, Indigenous theatre, in defiance of Indigenous experience, should remain enclosed as a pure anthropological artefact.' Similar processes of appropriating and working with Greek tragedy as a political and (politically) personal voice are also seen in the USA in the work of Rhodessa Jones and her Medea Project: Theatre for Incarcerated Women (a workshop programme for incarcerated women that involves, among other sources, classical drama for personal and social change).³ Jones' workshops, the scripts and productions represent part of the varied global, post-colonial 'approaches to adapting Medea to modern contexts' (Wetmore 2013: 7). Wetmore, in the Introduction to his edited anthology of plays, *Black Medea: Adaptations in Modern Plays*, quotes Helene Foley on the modern theatrical recourse to Medea in the United States as an embodiment of both the disempowered and powerful:

... U.S. Medeas tend above all to represent the play's complex and multifaceted heroine as the wronged, if horrific, cultural 'other,' whether that other is black, mulatto, native American, Asian, lesbian, a failed beauty queen, a drag queen or an abused teenage mother.

2012: 192⁴

Regarding the reclamation of classicism by indigenous authors and artists, as well as by individuals and groups in Foley's intersectional exempla, 'practice runs ahead of theory' (Hardwick 2007: 3).

Black Medea was first developed for and by the Sydney Theatre Company (STC) and staged at the Wharf Theatre, Sydney in 2000. 'The cast of four related the story more than enacted it, with the music providing much of the emotional content' (Monaghan 2016: 439). A totally new production was worked up from this original, and staged in 2005 at Belvoir Street Theatre, Sydney and Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne.⁵

Euripides' Medea⁶

When Jason and Medea were accused of murdering his uncle Pelias, in his native city of Iolkus in Thessaly, they sought refuge at Corinth, together with their two sons. Euripides focused his tragedy, staged in 431 BC, on the consequences of Jason's decision to secure his and his children's future at Corinth by rejecting Medea and accepting the hand of Creousa, daughter of King Creon. Euripides' Medea took revenge on Jason both by contriving the deaths of Creon and Creousa (as in other versions of the legend) and – in a shocking new variant – by murdering her own two sons, after which she departed from Corinth in a chariot provided by her ancestor, the Sun God.

Medea begins the drama as an underdog; she is a woman – only one place above a slave in the hierarchy of ancient Greek society – and an unmarried mother (Medea and Jason had no marriage ceremony valid in Greece). She is also an exile, and a barbarian. In all these ways she is marked out from the ruling class, which consisted only of

ethnically Greek male citizens. Euripides first presents Medea as heartbroken, stricken into grief by having been so unceremoniously and brutally abandoned. The Nurse tells the audience that Medea is suffering because she has been deprived of *timē* ('dishonoured', 20). This was a powerful word, and a strange one to use repeatedly about a woman, since *timē* – honour and status, measured by a person's actual situation and possessions – was a central component of Greek *male* excellence.

The 'disease' that is poisoning the household has been caused entirely by Jason's infidelity; Euripides constantly emphasizes the importance for a woman of fair treatment as a sexual being (265–6, 569–71, 1290ff.), and in the finale Jason bitterly accuses Medea of causing all this destruction just because of her sexual feelings, to which she replies fiercely: 'Do you think that is a small thing for a woman to suffer?' (1338, 1366ff.). It is also repeatedly stressed that Jason has broken the oath to remain faithful to Medea, which he swore in Colchis (21ff., 439, 492ff., 778).

In consequence Euripides can appeal for sympathy for Medea, in her opening speech on the lot of women (230ff.), and through the support of the Corinthian women – especially in the second Chorus (410ff.). However, the drama rapidly moves on into new, deeply disturbing territory. Images of Medea as like a wild beast (92–3, 188), coupled with the Nurse's fears for the children (36ff., 98ff., 116ff.), have already hinted that Medea is more than the weeping 'female-as-victim' that she at first appears to be. And Medea is now entirely alone, since as her brother's murderer she has no paternal house to which she can return, accepting her divorce passively, like a normal Greek woman (358ff., 502ff., 603, 710ff.). Medea makes a surprising response to this situation; like a normal Greek *male* of noble birth, she refuses to allow herself to be shamed or her enemies to be able to laugh at her, and resolves to take revenge on those who have diminished her *timē* (367ff.).

However, Medea's murder plan demands that she send her children to Creousa with the poisoned robe – and (in an echo of the traditional version of the story) this could clearly lead to their being killed in vengeance by Creon's relatives. That is intolerable – again, because it is unbearable to be laughed at by enemies. She will not permit it to happen; she will kill her own children (791ff.; cf. 1237–8).

At this point the audience realizes that Medea's gender exacts a hideous price for her adoption of male values; because she is female, and emotionally attached to her sons, her revenge can only cause her grief. Euripides develops her agonizing dilemma; if she does not want to be considered worthless and weak, how can she achieve her vengeance on her enemies without hurting her dearest ones?

Euripides' Medea began the drama lamenting like a suffering hero because, as a woman in a male-dominated society, she was treated little better than a slave. At the end she has triumphed over her enemies, and, although she has suffered great grief herself, she has given much more suffering to Jason, who is forced to adopt the then normally female role of grieving impotently for lost relatives. Jason is unheard and desperate as he abuses her and calls upon the gods (1389ff., 1460ff.). Medea escapes unscathed after her revenge, and even denies Jason the chance to bury their children – that she will do herself (1378ff.). She ends the drama like a goddess – appearing on high *ex machina*, dispensing

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matters in accordance with her will and instituting a future cult, just as gods do in other late fifth-century tragedies.

In normal Greek ethics there was no credible way of criticizing what we might think to be an excessive revenge; provided you were successful, the fullest possible revenge on an enemy who had wronged you was justifiable and indeed essential. This is why Euripides' strategy in *Medea* was so devastating. When Medea avenges herself on Creousa, Creon and Jason, her total success and scot-free escape left a normal Athenian male with no valid grounds in his ethical system on which to detest her; but the spectacle of a foreign woman succeeding so totally in her revenge against a Greek man, who was only divorcing her, as many Greek men did to older wives, would make them very uneasy. The males in the audience could not condemn Medea at the end, because they could not deny that she possesses what mattered in their value-system – power and success.

The reaction, which Euripides forced from female members of his audience, was almost equally drastic. Medea vigorously denounces the inequity of a woman's lot in ancient Greece; she asserts the worth of women; and she implies – and the Corinthian Women state openly – that some females possess intelligence equal to, sometimes superior to, that of many men (1081ff.). All this was bound to elicit strong approval from most women. Medea then avenges herself for a wrong done to her womanhood – but she is obliged in doing so to destroy one of the most fundamental aspects of being female, the bond between mother and children. Like the men in the audience, the women were obliged at the conclusion of the drama to admire Medea for doing something, which naturally inspires their revulsion. When he created this deeply confrontational tragedy, Euripides ran the risk of incurring the disapproval of his entire audience. This may well explain why the judges placed his entry last in the competition.

Enoch and Euripides

In view of the fame of Euripides' tragedy, and the many subsequent reworkings into plays and operas – from Seneca to Corneille to Cherubini and beyond, to Anouilh and others – simply to name a play *Black Medea* is to tell a modern audience that the heroine will kill her child or children. This is the fundamental element which Euripides' *Medea* added to the myth, and which almost all subsequent treatments have employed.

Enoch both widens and narrows Euripides' focus. Widens, in that the cosmic dimension, which only appears in *Medea* with Medea's closing appearance on the chariot of her ancestor the Sun God, is constantly present from the beginning of *Black Medea*, where Medea challenges the ancestral spirits; and narrows, in that the drama enclosed within that dimension becomes a domestic tragedy. Indeed, the rich overtones of Jason's betrothal in Euripides to a Greek princess become simply the modern Jason's infidelity with a series of 'sluts' (Enoch 2007a: 77), and the outbursts of domestic violence (inherited from his father, 2007a: 71) show how conflicted he is between his heritage and trying to build a life for himself and Medea in a white-built city house (Figure 5.1).



Figure 5.1 Scene from the 2005 production of Wesley Enoch's *Black Medea* at Belvoir Street Theatre, Sydney. Medea (Margaret Harvey) and Jason (Aaron Pedersen). © Heidrun Löhr.

Like Euripides (and like Ibsen in his last plays), Enoch begins very late in the story of Jason and Medea, near its horrifying climax. This means that there is a considerable backstory, most of which is given to the audience by the Chorus (one woman). Medea was a girl who grew up in Country,⁷ but was educated at a boarding school in a town or city. She wanted more than to be married off to one of her community, and realized this ambition when she found Jason, then a mining engineer. They moved to a city, where Jason became 'a blackfella in a suit, working his way up the corporate ladder, a city black with his hair wavy, bleached with saltwater air' (Enoch 2007a: 66). But Jason failed to hold down a series of jobs (2007a: 70), he is alienated from his people and culture, and commits serious domestic violence against his wife. Meanwhile Medea faces relentless pressure from the Chorus, representing the voice of the wind, the voices of her Country:

CHORUS Bring the boy back and all will be forgiven. Face us, face what you've done and all will be forgiven. We're waiting for you. Free the boy, before he becomes a copy of his father.

MEDEA And if I don't?

CHORUS Then I will unleash *hell* upon you.

2007a: 68

The classical Jason valued Medea for her magical powers, which enabled him to win the Golden Fleece; Enoch's modern Jason liked to show off to his city (white?) friends the

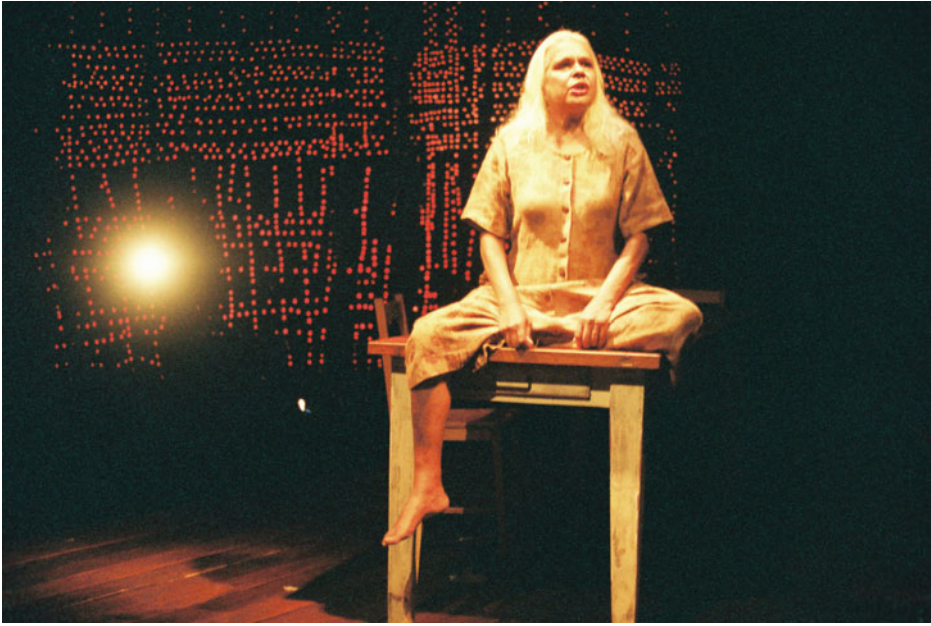


Figure 5.2 Scene from the 2005 production of Wesley Enoch's *Black Medea* at Belvoir Street Theatre, Sydney. Chorus (Justine Saunders). © Heidrun Löhr.

depth of Medea's knowledge of the Lore⁸ of her Country: 'All the dances and songs my granny taught me, that was my dowry. I bought your love, Jason' (2007a: 72).

Black Medea's motivation for filicide is as complex as her famous predecessor's. But – as is stated in the programme for the 2005 production at Belvoir Street Theatre⁹ – it is not revenge: 'Here it is the wider social construct that forces Medea to act, not for revenge, but to prevent her children facing a worse fate in the future.' Euripides' Medea kills her sons for many reasons. She wants to punish Jason out of a justified sense of being the betrayed and emotionally desecrated wife. This is certainly implicit in the first half of the play, particularly in the Nurse's speech. But as her thoughts turn to filicide, just after her encounter with Aegeus, her motivation for doing so centres on her adherence to the male heroic code:

It is intolerable to be laughed at by my enemies.

797

She continues:

Let no one think that I'm of no account, or weak,
Or passive; I am just the opposite –
A heavy burden on my enemies, but generous to my friends;
People like that have the most glorious life.

807–10

Even when she falters and rethinks her plan, she again steels herself:

What am I thinking? Shall I let my enemies gloat?
And let them go unpunished?

1049–50

She talks herself into believing that her children would be best served by death, arguing that it would be unacceptable to leave them alive to be outraged by her enemies (1059–60). Her action is also based on re-establishing a moral equilibrium after Jason breaks a sacred oath – not simply the oath of a union, but one witnessed by the gods in testimony to Medea's help in procuring the Golden Fleece. Thus, the murder of the sons may be interpreted as a mandatory blood-sacrifice to atone for Jason's impiety.

Euripides' Medea was torn between her fierce need for vengeance and her feelings as a mother; Black Medea decides that she has deprived her child of his proper place in Country, and she ultimately determines to free him and give him back that place by killing him:

Spirits, the moon pulls me like the tide. I will not allow the sun to rise for him another day in this house. Before this night is through, my son will be freed, before the next day dawns, my son will know the spirits of his Land. I will take him.

2007a: 79

Black Medea takes the life of her son as a blood-sacrifice, 'a blood debt' as she exclaims in her opening monologue (Enoch 2007a: 61). But it is not only to atone for Jason's transgression but for one shared – one that belongs to both husband and wife. Both Medea and Jason have befouled the Land and its Ancestors, and so the boy is slaughtered and the Spirits are appeased. Enoch hereby recalls Euripides' exploration of the filicide as sacrifice, emphasizing this with a scene in which Medea bathes the child prior to her act. Euripides' heroine attempts to convince herself that what she is about to do is ritualistic – sacrificial:

For anyone who has
No right to be present at my sacrifices,
Let that be his concern; my hand will not weaken.

1053–5

After the deed, she defines it as *dussebēs phonos*, 'impious murder' (1383). Euripides' Medea will enact a yearly ritual in honour of her sons and in reparation for her crime:

... I shall bury them with my own hand,
First taking them to the sacred place of the goddess Hera,
So none of my enemies may pull up their graves,

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And mutilate their bodies. And in this land of Sisyphus
I shall create a sacred festival and rites for evermore
To atone for this impious murder.

1378–83

Prior to Black Medea's action, the Chorus promises similar rites for her:

When we won't say your name and bury your body to rot for a year, the Land will
reclaim you.

When we have performed the rites, when we have burnt the flesh from your
bones and painted them with red ochre. We'll wrap your bones in bark and wait for
your body . . .

2007a: 78

Both Medeas have left their native land to be with their Jasons; and Enoch's Medea
does undergo a conflict, different from but no less agonizing than that of Euripides'
heroine. On the one hand, there is the Lore of her Country (raped by the bulldozers of
the mining company for which Jason worked when she met him). On the other hand,
there is her desire – formed earlier, perhaps when she had a government-funded place at
a school in town – for a different life: 'she has dreams of living in a big house with a
garden, in a place where the sand doesn't creep in under the door' (Chorus, 2007a: 66). In
consequence, her rebuke to Jason after the filicide is richly significant. She declares that
'I have saved him [their son] from becoming you'.¹⁰ Medea tells Jason:

Look at me. Let my face be tattooed in your brain for I have done the rites and this
house must burn to honour our son. Look at me and see the last face that loved
you. I have left you.

2007a: 80

She continues:

The spirits call me back to my home . . . Whatever my hell, I will sleep pleased in
the knowledge that my grief has yours for company. Wherever you go, bear witness
that there are no gods.

2007a: 80

Enoch's Jason is not even allowed the pathetic recriminations uttered by Euripides' Jason
in response to Medea's speech over the body. It silences him. After this, all that is left is
for her to burn down the house, and be reabsorbed into Country ('The Desert Story', the
last words of the play, 80–1).

The classical Medea achieves almost divine powers in her closing rebuke to Jason,
delivered from on high as she escapes Corinth on the Sun God's chariot. Unlike her,

Black Medea is not triumphant in her vengeance. In this speech she acknowledges that she may undergo 'hell' and grief. But her internal conflict is resolved: 'The spirits call me back to my home . . .' (80). Now, for the first time in the play, she no longer resists that call but accepts it unreservedly. She has totally rejected their marriage's failed attempt to assimilate into white-dominated urban culture (just as Euripides' 'barbarian' Medea totally rejected her Jason's chosen haven of Corinth), and the burning of the house is not only a funeral rite for the body of her son but also an act that destroys their pretence at living away from their indigenous roots. The desert landscape is fundamental to the play, as the next section demonstrates.

The Landscape of Jukurrpa

This section of the chapter deals with the physical and spiritual landscapes evoked by Enoch in the script and their transferral to the stage by set designer, Christina Smith, in the 2005 production at Belvoir Street Theatre, Sydney, and the Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne. Its aim is to consider how the elemental and natural images of Euripides' original text, translated into another context in Enoch's play, can be realized on stage to both engage with and augment *Black Medea* as a reception piece.

Euripides' *Medea* is imbued with elemental, natural and environmental references (see, for example, Blaiklock 1955). Enoch does the same, and writes Medea not only as the air, but as the earth and the subterranean as well. Such symbolic means of representing Medea were not lost on playwrights and filmmakers working before Enoch; Heiner Müller (see, for example Marranca 1988; Campbell 2008; Kvistad 2009) and Lars von Trier (see Joseph and Johnson 2008) also seem transfixed by the momentous, or alien, or frightening landscapes and elemental forces that surround Euripides' (anti-)heroine. And while obviously artificial and partly domestic, Smith's set for *Black Medea* is also manifestly natural (as well as elemental and spiritual) in its evocation of Jukurrpa (usually, and poorly, translated as the 'Dreaming' or 'Dreamtime'):

At the root of the Indigenous peoples' relationship with landscape is the 'Dreaming', an inadequate English term invented by non-Aborigines to reference an extraordinary nexus of concepts that has no equivalent in Western culture. To borrow the words of Jeannie Herbert Nungarrayi, a Lajamanu woman, the Dreaming is 'a total framework that accounts for every aspect of existence . . . inform[ing] the past, present and future, and dictat[ing] all moral and ethical behaviour as well as people's relationship with the natural environment.'

Collingwood-Whittick 2008: 61

A table¹¹ and chairs rest on a wooden floor but are surrounded by graphite tailings; above hangs a traditional fishing net, and a metal screen pierced with holes allows the lighting, designed by Rachel Burke, to filter, fade and filter again in a theatrical mimesis of Dot Paintings¹² (Figure 5.3). This screen is huge and dominates the stage, taking its

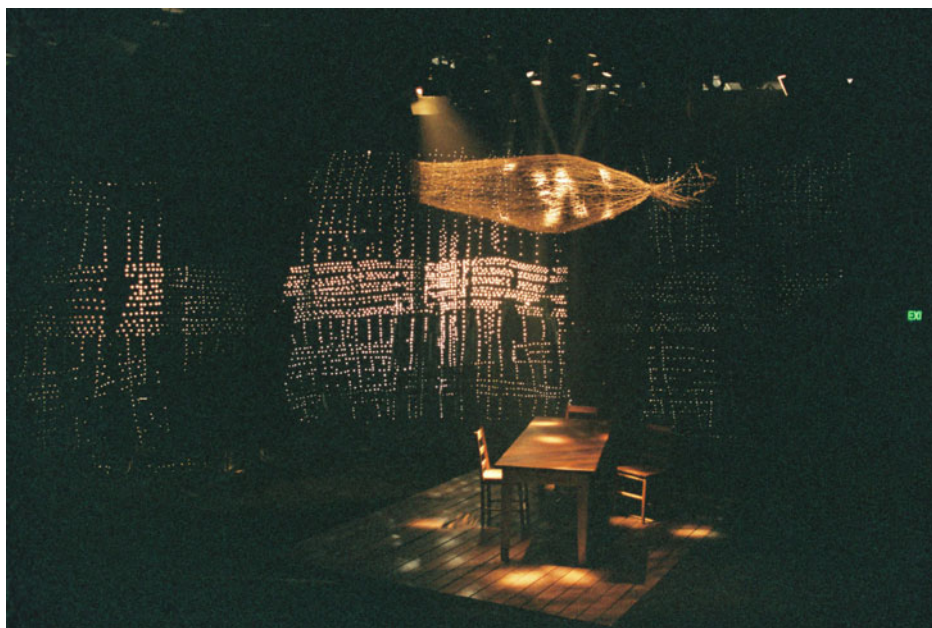


Figure 5.3 Scene from the 2005 production of Wesley Enoch's *Black Medea* at Belvoir Street Theatre, Sydney. Set design by Christina Smith. © Heidrun Löhr.

inspiration from the art of Dorothy Napangardi (c. 1956–2013)¹³ from Yuendumu in the Tanami Desert, Northern Territory. Yuendumu, one of the remotest communities in Central Australia, is largely populated by Warlpiri and Anmatyerr peoples. Dorothy was a Warlpiri woman whose Songlines¹⁴ are from the west of Yuendumu in the Tanami Desert, in Country characterized by salt lakes, claypan soakages and sandhills. Dorothy repeatedly painted *Mina Mina Jukurrpa* about the women's ceremonial site of Mina Mina (to the west of Yuendumu in the Tanami Desert), reflecting the Songlines of Dorothy's female ancestors who collected digging sticks (*kuturu*) that emerged from the ground. The women took the *kuturu* and travelled across Country, using the sticks to make new life forms and landscapes as they went. Dorothy's *Mina Mina* series captures the journey of her female ancestors who danced across Country, encapsulating their movements, their trails or tracks, as well as the landscapes around them.

Prior to the 2005 production of *Black Medea*, Dorothy's most notable linen mural, 'Salt on Mina Mina' (2001), was awarded first prize in the 18th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award. In this work, Dorothy's view is an aerial one; she traces intricate lines of intersecting tracks that weave a cartographical web of ancient journeys across Country. Her view is geologically specific, showing the topography of the sacred site. Dorothy's mural captures the two vast soakage areas of her Country – the clay pans that hold water, which quickly soaks into the ground to produce areas of dry earth, raised at the edges and etched in salt, salt on Mina Mina. In the 2005 productions, her vision

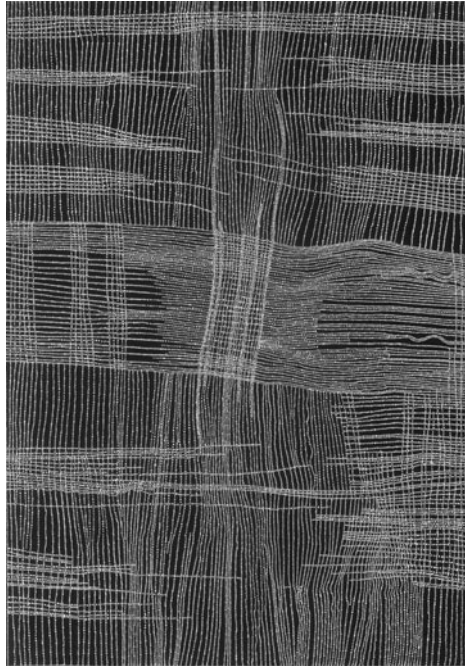


Figure 5.4 Dorothy Napangardi. 'Salt on Mina Mina', 2001. Synthetic polymer paint on linen. 2440 x 1680 mm. Purchased 2001. Reproduced courtesy of the Telstra Collection, Museum and Art Gallery Northern Territory © Estate of the artist licensed by Aboriginal Artists Agency Ltd.

was transformed in the set design to a metal screen that symbolizes not only Mina Mina Jukurrpa but also the Jukurrpa of First Australians per se.

But it is not only geography – the physical land – that is represented by the set and the painting that inspired it; the set also symbolizes the stories embedded in Central and Western Desert art: ecological information, species interaction, Lore that guides human interactions and ethical and moral protocols. Within this space stands Black Medea:

MEDEA walks the perimeter of the space. A desert wind blows. The walls come alive. She winks in and out of sight as she walks. She glides as if by magic. She enters with her son. She listens to the wind. She's concerned. She hugs her son and sends him off.

2007a: 61

She is in the city and she is in the desert. This duality underlines the foreignness of Euripides' original heroine by emphasizing her estrangement from her own land, and transfers these very important 'keys' to one's understanding of the psychology of Euripides' Medea to the Medea of Enoch's play. There is the city – there is a house in the city – there is a table and there are chairs – but these are engulfed by graphite sand, and

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the desert wind blows. Medea lives not only in two landscapes but also in two cultures. The sand around the kitchen table, the soundscape of wind and the Mina Mina screen is a potent and symbolic reminder that the culture Medea left behind, so entrenched in her Country, can never be erased, despite her relocation to the city and rejection of her place and people of origin. Her first words are described by Enoch (2007a: 61) as a 'Battle Cry' – a fury of words hurled at her Country and her Jukurrpa –

I am not frightened of you. I have faced everything I fear and defeated it. You think you are a match for me? The day has finally come . . . and today . . . I will vanquish you. Today . . . Jason and I will no longer run. And you will feel the sharpened edge of a mother's love and a wife's loyalty.

2007a: 61

– but she is wrong to believe that her strength, her power, comes from that which she has rejected. Medea's is the folly of arrogance. She snarls at the wind, she defies the voices, she wants the city, a nuclear family, a husband in a suit:

I am a daughter of this Land. I have the knowledge of my people. I have the power of my clan, I have the strength of my marriage, I have the love of my husband, I have the weapons of my wits. I am Medea.¹⁵

So come now and face me.

There is a blood debt to pay and not a drop of mine shall fall upon the thirsty earth.

2007a: 61

She cannot have it both ways. Her Country and Lore, which she has betrayed, stay with her: haunting her – naming her – accusing her. She cannot seek protection from that which she has cast off, this very landscape and its spirits, which now summon her to account, to pay the 'blood debt'. She has harmed her friends and helped her enemies and so, like her classical predecessor, her past dominates and indeed shapes her present. Both live with the constant reminder of the consequences of their treachery. We thus recall the Euripidean Jason screaming to his wife after her murderous deed:

Wretch! I'm sane now – then I was mad
When I brought you from your home in a barbarian land
To a Greek household – a great evil,
Betrayer of your father and the land that nurtured you.
The gods have inflicted your avenging spirit on me too;
For you killed your brother beside the hearth
Before you came aboard our beautiful ship Argo.
That's how you began . . .

1329ff.

Enoch's Jason also hears the Land and its Ancestors singing, singing him to madness. Perhaps there is an echo here of Orestes, who in tragedies by Aeschylus (*Libation Bearers*) and Euripides (*Orestes*) was maddened by the avenging Furies of the mother whom he had killed:

JASON: It haunts me, it's following me . . .

. . .

MEDEA: They're singing to you Jason, they're making you crazy.

2007a: 63

Jason and Medea are being sent crazy. Medea, the 'cunning one', the wise one, knows this and knows why. Jason refuses to understand. With a beer in his hand, a house sealed up to keep out the wind, a failed career as a mining engineer and a tendency to beat his wife, the last thing Jason wants or needs is to be told 'that shit'. As the wind howls and the Ancestors speak, Jason tells Medea:

There are no spirits. You're talking to your fucking self.

2007a: 73

But there are spirits, and their memories are long.

Medea's betrayal is the betrayal of Country. She took Jason to a new area for the bulldozers to dig, and participated in the desecration of her Ancestors' bones. Her crime of leading Jason to 'sacred places' and turning her back 'when they dug up the earth', is initially punished by a 'loveless bed' and 'the madness of a man', a man who has become 'a shell of everything he was capable of' (2007a: 74). Her dowry, then, is one of sacrificial love and betrayal, as the Chorus reveals (2007a: 65).

The single-woman Chorus represents many things. She is the narrator who provides the history of the story. She is the voice of the wind. She is the embodiment of the Ancestor Spirits. She is Country. She comes to reclaim Medea and her son. She comes for justice. As the Chorus explains, Medea's crime is one of heinous desecration; she led Jason to his Golden Fleece (the minerals under the earth) and in so doing disturbed the Great Spirit, the Rainbow Serpent,¹⁶ and the Ancestors who dwell with it (Enoch 2007a: 75). As Protector of the Land and its People, the creative force of the Great Spirit can also turn to destructiveness when disrespected. Jason, for his part in the crime, is also punished. The Chorus as Ancestral Memory, as the voice of the injured Rainbow Serpent, calls Jason away from sanity and away from his wife. As the Chorus drives Medea into doubt, into facing her crimes, into returning to her Land, so too the Chorus 'works' on Jason by urging him to cast out Medea 'before payback catches you [Jason]' (Enoch 2007a: 71). Jason does cast her out. She argues, pointing out what she did for him, what she gave up for him; she tells him she loves him, but he remains resolute. Eventually, she knows she must return to her Country – but not before she makes the 'blood debt' on behalf of herself and Jason (61), and sends her son home to Country (2007a: 79).

The Chorus is perfectly complemented by Smith's set design (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). The homage to 'Salt on Mina Mina', and the presence of Justine Saunders as the Chorus, combine to represent or symbolize the Chorus as an Elder who speaks of the significance of Jukurrpa. The Jukurrpa Mina Mina, which is one of the female Songlines from Warlpiri Country (as discussed above), is thereby rightly represented by a woman in the play. And, as an Elder, and possibly an ancestral Elder, the Chorus, much like those from Greek tragedy, speaks words that should – must – be heeded by the other characters. In this sense, Enoch's Chorus reminds both Medea and Jason, as well as the audience, of the role of Elders in preserving traditional knowledge or Lore, and keeping Songlines alive.

Wesley Enoch's *Black Medea* is both a domestic and national tragedy. Through the lens of arguably the most tragic of Greek tragedies, Enoch sings a modern songline that extends further back than Classical Athens. His is a story that begins some 50,000 years ago, travelling through Euripides' era, past 1788, into the present. Amid this creative anachronism that is Classical Reception at its best, is the microcosm of a family inscribed – both from within and from without – by domestic violence, alcoholism and financial crisis, and beset by spiritual and cultural dislocation. These issues are difficult and, arguably, inappropriate for white theatre-makers – indeed, whitefellas per se – to address. *Black Medea* therefore prompts the question of who can speak for whom in an Australia still marked and marred by its unresolved treatment of its original owners. In an interview with Enoch in 2005, he said that he believes that discussions of such traditionally taboo topics should be extended: 'It's hard for the empowered to talk about the disempowered. Why shouldn't they talk about them?'¹⁷ In an interview in 2015, Enoch makes the wise disclaimer that there should be what he terms 'distancing structures' in place for meaningful discussions to take place. He sees his use of the myth of Medea as one such structure, which not only makes the play safer for indigenous audiences, but ensures an authentically appropriate response to his own sense of responsibility in speaking to and for Aboriginal Australians:

... for me, talking to mostly Indigenous audiences – well I'd like to talk to mostly Indigenous audiences through that work – what does it mean to use a story that's once, twice removed from their cultural experience. Number one, it's based on a story that they may or may not know the details of. Number two, it's in a theatre, which is already another step removed from the cultural experience of most Indigenous people. And so therefore we can talk about the issues or see the violence in a kind of distanced manner.¹⁸

Black Medea's is not a bitter-sweet departure in a chariot provided by the Sun God. But, like her tragic counterpart, hers is a journey back to origin. As the play ends and Medea begins the journey to Country, to death, she replicates the steps of the Dreaming Women Ancestors, the women of Dorothy Napangardi's 'Salt on Mina Mina'.

CHAPTER 6

WHAT WOMEN CRITICS KNOW THAT MEN DON'T

Jane Montgomery Griffiths

Theatre is not polite. There can be a veneer of good behaviour among the cheap fizz and canapés of opening night: the soothing platitudes of industry gush, the 'Darling, you were wonderful' of fellow actors' post-show hyperbole; and further in the season, the pleasant bonhomie of the general public's desire for 'a good night out'. But essentially, theatre is a messy business, where the rawness of the rehearsal floor subverts normal codes of social engagement, and where critical reception is generally neither polite nor well-behaved.

This chapter, which aims to match like with like, is therefore neither polite nor well-behaved. What follows is an elaboration on an article I was asked to write about the critical reception of an adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone* (2015a) I created for Melbourne's Malthouse Theatre in 2015 (Montgomery Griffiths 2015b). Elsewhere I have written about the process of this adaptation in more traditionally academic tones, and I would direct those wanting a scholarly analysis of the workings of Reception in this case to those papers (Montgomery Griffiths 2017 and 2018). This chapter, however, is not traditionally academic, and intentionally so. It is unashamedly personal, because, for the practitioners involved in creating adaptations of the classical canon, Reception is personal. The very fact of capitalizing this word brings the personal involved in Reception to the fore: we can engage academically and objectively in the various contextual frames of Reception, analysing issues of historicity and what Martindale (2006: 3) calls the 'situated, contingent, mediated' hermeneutics involved, but the subjectivity we bring to our engagement with classical texts on stage makes the 'R' of 'Reception' vie with the smaller minuscule of our personal 'reception'. The objective and the subjective, the academic and the emotional work in conflict as we respond to performance. And in this focus on the personal, this chapter deliberately breaks the rules both of academic engagement and of artist/critic engagement: it uses the artist's eye/I to scrutinize the critic's eye/I, and in so doing, opens itself to the never-ending oscillations of subjective scrutiny, which is at the core of Reception.

A theatrical frame

Since this is a volume on Australasian Classical Reception and a chapter on the impoliteness of critical reception *and* theatrical Reception, my starting point is that fine example of impolite Aussie vernacular, 'the brown eye'. I am sitting in Malthouse Theatre's

Beckett auditorium in May 2017, watching three sets of bare buttocks talking into microphones. Through the strange mimetic alchemy of theatre, the three bottoms start to assume personalities. The very visible anuses anthropomorphize. The fleshy smoothness of the performers' rears becomes the faceless visage of the theatre critic. Their sphincters excrete a torrent of bad reviews, critiquing female theatre-makers and feminist theatrical aesthetics. In none-too-subtle imagery, the critics are talking out of their arses. The critics are literally (at least later in the show) talking shit. This production, *Wild Bore*, is the work of feminist performance artists Adrienne Truscott, Zoe Combs Marr and Ursula Martinez. It is a scabrous, hilarious, gloriously scatological deconstruction of theatre criticism and the multiple levels of meta-commentary and epitextual framing that occur in Reception. For all the grotesquely hilarious obscenity of the show, it is very, very clever, and is perhaps the most intelligent analysis of critical reception I have seen in the theatre. It is both the ends and the means of Reception; so self-referential, it defies criticism; so aware of meta-textuality, it debunks all attempts at analysis. This production per se, in terms of its questioning of theatrical hermeneutics, would make a good frame for any article about classical theatrical framing. What grabs me as I watch it, however, is a sense of familiarity with the critical flatulence being emitted. A fair portion of these words, I recognize with ambivalent pleasure, were written about *me*, about *my work*. These 'terrible, terrible'¹ reviews that are making the audience – myself included – roar with laughter as they are excreted from the bottoms of these performers were said about *my* adaptation of *Antigone*, and about *my* performance in it. And I find in the act of watching this show, and hearing and witnessing these words and these images, I am pushed down the rabbit hole of the complexity of Reception, and am entwined in the rhizomatic intricacies of when and if there is an end point to Reception.

The cause of these appalling reviews, and the starting point for a fair amount of the material in *Wild Bore*, was my 2015 adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone*, and my later response to the criticism it provoked.² Commissioned by Melbourne's Malthouse Theatre, the adaption started life as a literal translation I made from Sophocles' Greek, and then morphed into something new as I worked to my commissioning brief. The new play was to have a cast of five, there was to be no doubling, no masks and no Chorus, it was to have the visceral quality of the horrific images of the MH17 plane crash, be contemporary, urgent and about ninety minutes long. The rest was up to me. Through various vicissitudes, the project changed substantially over the developmental period: a new director, Adena Jacobs, was brought into the project and, after protracted difficulties in casting the right male lead, the decision was made to rewrite Creon as a female politician. Further difficulties in casting this new role resulted in me being cast as Creon (now called 'The Leader'), about a fortnight before rehearsals began and several months after I had written the new draft.

So much for the bare bones. Now comes the interesting part in terms of Reception. The critical response to this production was extraordinarily divided. It was extraordinarily personal. It was extraordinarily gendered. And it showed, in microcosm, the extraordinary potency of the act of classical adaptation and Classical Reception. My dual role as writer

and performer had laid me open to condemnation for dual hubris: re-writing the master and having the temerity to act the desecration. Male critics had no hesitation in pointing this out. So contentious was the production, and indeed so contentious the gendered divide in the critical response, that a month after the production finished, I was asked to write an article for an online arts journal responding to the critics and analysing the difference between the male and female reviews (Montgomery Griffiths 2015b). For some weeks, my article became more controversial than the production: it was 'shared' and 'liked' over 3,000 times, became the catalyst for several industry workshops and panel debates, was cited in international newspapers, elicited 100 comments (see Adams 2015; Dyball 2015; Gardner 2015), and provided one of the catalysts for the development of *Wild Bore*. The online rejoinders in response to my response to the critics' response opened up a whole new level of Reception. This was an entirely new root structure and tunnel system in the rabbit hole, in which the act of Reception inherent in adaptation transformed into a broader form of Reception, a form that essentially mirrored the adaptation process itself by questioning authority, meaning-creation and subjectivity but added to it a whole new level of online trolling that made Classical Reception Studies suddenly seem as current as Trumpian Twitter threads. The Reception rabbit hole went deeper, and roots became more entangled.

I started my article with what seemed to me to be a relatively uncontentious proposition: women are good at translation. We are culturally programmed for it. We learn early on to translate the world we inhabit: to adapt the stories that permeate our culture to have meaning for us; to adapt our own stories to be amenable to the male ears that might be listening; to adapt our bodies, our voices, our words, our thoughts to make them acceptable. We translate to find our own stories in a male narrative, and our own vision in a world framed by a male lens. From childhood, we develop this skill. As we meet the western literary canon, we learn to read between the lines and find our own subversions. We find a parallel reading to the grand male narrative. Our reading is made up of intertextualities that weave together time and place and male and female, alienation and identification. We would learn that interpretation is more a lava lamp than a ladder, that translation is more an oscillation than a direct line. Because that is what all women who want to find meaning in the works of Homer or Sophocles or Shakespeare must do; we must endlessly translate.

Of course, this type of translation is not a linear search for linguistic equivalence. It does not prioritize a seemingly originary text. It does not see a clear progression from source to target. It does not even consider fidelity to the source important – because that source invariably negates the female experience. It is a lateral, rhizomatic form of translation that gives a resigned shrug and weary sigh to the traditionalists' frequently, and tediously, trotted out axiom, *traduttore traditore* (translator, traitor), and carries on regardless with its own meaning creation and quiet works of subversion. In relation to my Reception of *Antigone*, this issue of how women translate and how we tell our stories is, I argued, particularly germane. The extraordinary division in gender in the critical response to my adaptation raised serious questions about the assumptions, misinformation, and downright sexism out there in the critical cultural conversation.

Of the ten reviews in 2015 (excluding private blogs), four by men are uniformly bad – one-and-a-half to two ‘star’ demolitions of the production (Bache; Bensley; Furhmann; Woodhead). Four by women are uniformly positive – detailed responses to the production that, even with reservations, find value in the work (Croggon; Peard; Stone; Wieringa). Then there is one equivocal but generally positive review by a man (Boyd), and one very unequivocal hammering of the show by a woman (Drouyn).

This pointed gender divide is worth some examination. The four negative reviews written by young men all have similar traits. Each engages in outrage that the source text is not being honoured; each psychoanalyses my motivations; each dictates what Greek tragedy should be and notes my failure to observe Sophoclean dramaturgy; each complains of two-dimensional characterization; each complains about my writing style; and, a little bizarrely, each turns praise of my performance into a criticism that I am too good – my ‘command of the stage is so complete it’s almost farcical’ (Furhmann); my acting, as opposed to my writing, is so good it ‘breed[s] a special kind of resentment’ (Bache). The formula is simple: make a sweeping statement about the essential nature of Greek tragedy, demonstrate intellectual superiority by throwing in a quote from Hegel, or a misused bit of Greek, or a suggestion that the reviewer knows more about Greek metre than I do, and undermine any suggestion that I might just have known what I was doing by accusing me of hubris or egotism. The problem with this approach to reviewing is that it fails to participate in the act of engagement – intellectual and visceral – that should be the starting point for any analysis and critique. The issue is not that these critics did not like the production, or were critical of my adaptation. That is the critic’s absolute right and I value informed, intelligent critique. The issue is that these critics demonstrate such entrenched preconceptions, such outrage that I should dare to have taken on the task of this adaptation and, even worse, performed in it, that the critique is less about the production than about my temerity and ‘limitations’ (Furhmann), and less about the production before them, than the never-extant play of their imagination. No openness to interrogate how adaptation and translation create meaning, no willingness to reconsider assumptions of the genre, or indeed how the meaning of gender performativity has altered over 2,500 years, no curiosity to analyse the whys and wherefores of an alternative interpretation. There is the absolute assumption that these critics know what is right, and that theirs is the only ‘reading’ of *Antigone* that can be right.

This response galls me, because, as all those male critics also picked up – but more by way of criticism than context – I am, as well as an actor and writer, a Classicist, and am pretty well up on both Sophocles’ Greek and critical interpretations of this play, from philology and dialecticism, through to psychoanalysis and queer theory. The critics’ knowledge of this, far from giving me any credibility, laid me open to dispiritingly obvious criticism that my text must therefore be a ‘limp’, ‘cold’, ‘turgid’, ‘grandiose’ ‘academic exercise’, rather than a piece of informed living theatre. It did not open the door to even the vaguest possibility that my knowledge might just mean I knew what I was doing, might just mean my interpretation was worthy of engagement.

The situation was very different with the female reviewers. In these reviews, from short paragraphs to a long comparative analysis, the reviewers sought to engage with

what was before them. They looked to understand the aesthetic being interrogated, the contextual history being subverted, and interestingly had none of the issues with two-dimensionality of character that so troubled the young men. Perhaps that is because women are better at translation, are more used to nuanced readings, are more open to interpretation, and have more experience in the subtleties of grief and manipulation. Perhaps they are more adept at interpreting subtext. Perhaps they see through a different lens and realize that a character can speak empty rhetoric while being tormented inside.

I would never be so generalist as to say this intellectual openness is a female universal – just as I would never be so reductive or sexist to say male critics cannot be open to engaging with 'alternative' work. The male reviewers in long-form blogs (Gow; Jackson) critiqued the production, whether positively or negatively, with every bit as much nuance as the mainstream female reviewers cited above. My one regret about the article was the title given to it by the editor, 'What women know that men don't' and its subheading, 'Women critics loved Griffith's [sic] *Antigone*. Men hated it'. I would never have written such a reductive title or gloss on both my argument and the range of reviewers.³ Indeed, I would vehemently argue that the sex of the reviewer is not the issue; it is the gendered lens through which they view that can be problematic. The one resoundingly negative female reviewer complained in ways very similar to the four negative male critics about the production. Her only extra points were telling: that creating a female Creon made the play *political* and not about gender; and that it depicted a woman in power being unpleasant to another woman. So clearly, it is quite possible for a female critic to have just as distorted a view of Greek theatre, just as little comprehension of its political imperative, and just as little understanding of feminism as any young male critic.

The interesting question is why were these elements of the adaptation and production so bothersome to this female reviewer? Presumably because they upset the apple cart of how women 'should be' represented. We must be emotional; we must be nurturing; we must be more interested in the personal than the political. The main theme, however, of the new female aesthetic being explored by contemporary feminist theatre-makers is our ability and right to address difficult political issues through women's experience – warts and all. To put 'difficult' women on stage, without translation. To address dilemmas without adaptation for the male lens and without the need to placate an internalized misogyny that says how women should behave. We need to get to a stage in our theatre when a woman can be allowed to tell her own story, without translation – in all its complexity, and grotesqueness, and ugliness, and non-conformity, and sometimes conformity, and sometimes subversion. Not as a feminist statement. But just 'coz. Because we are women theatre-makers and this is how we see the world, and our view is just as valid as the culturally predominant male lens we've spent so much time translating

Interestingly, the one mostly positive male critical response betrayed a similar set of preconceptions of what should and should not be seen on stage. His major criticism was that having a female Creon lessened the dramatic force of the argument with Haemon. Well yes, mothers and sons argue differently from fathers and sons. I would argue, however, that this adaptation of the rhetorical strategies employed, this shift in the tenor of the emotional manipulation utilized, makes simply for a different, not a lesser, dramatic

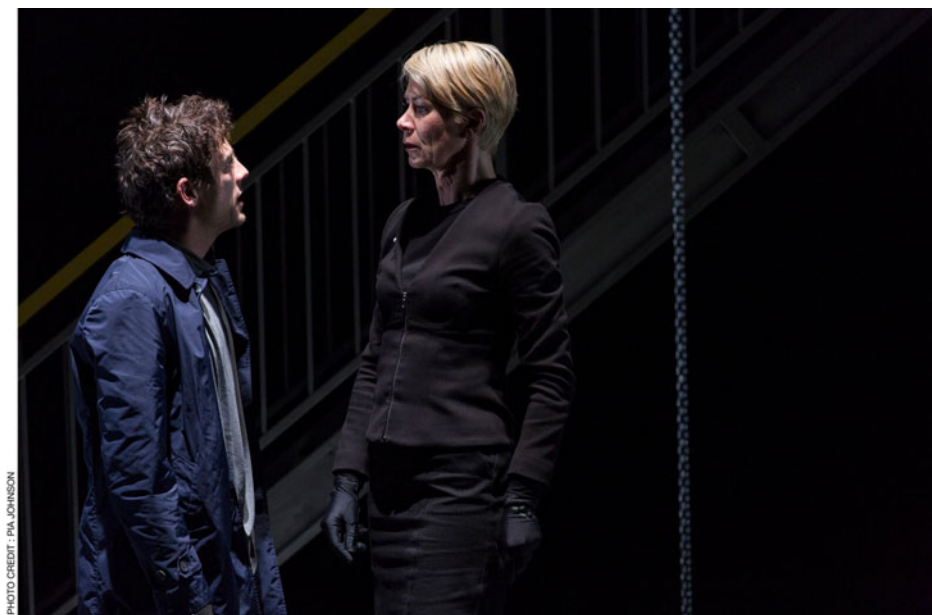


Figure 6.1 Jane Montgomery Griffiths as The Leader and Aaron Orzech as Haemon in *Antigone*. Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne, 2015. © Pia Johnson.

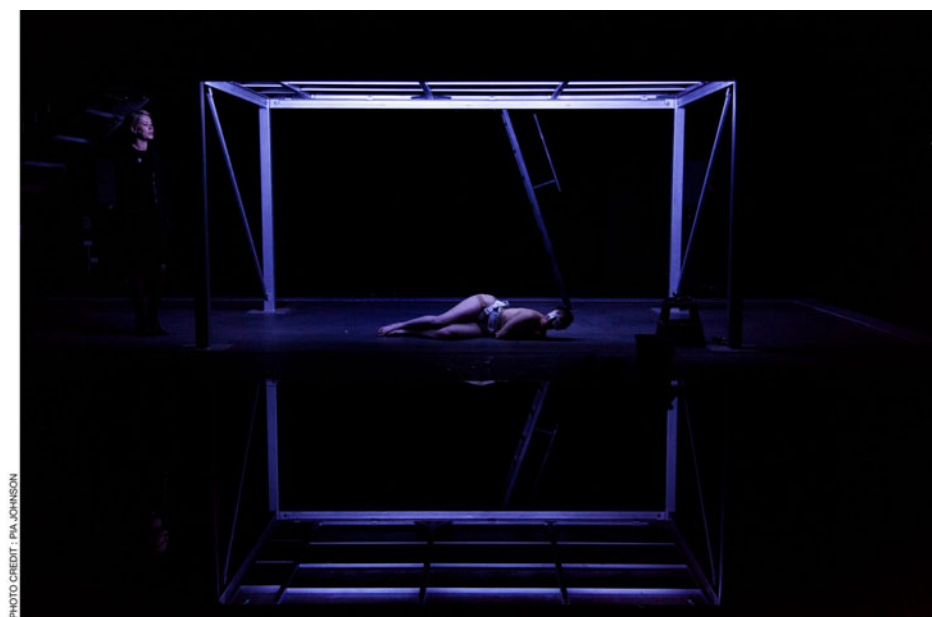


Figure 6.2 Jane Montgomery Griffiths as The Leader and Emily Milledge as Antigone in *Antigone*. Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne, 2015. © Pia Johnson.

force. Despite the critic's generally appreciative stance, this one comment demonstrates a deeply entrenched belief that men shouting at each other is intrinsically more dramatic than a less pyrotechnic but more rhetorically manipulative debate between a woman and her son.

The gendered critical divide in the response to *Antigone* pointed to a distinct difference in critical ways of seeing. If the critical divide in reviews was contentious, my argument glossed above was even more so, giving the adaptation an afterlife that ricocheted through social media for much longer than the shelf-life of the ephemeral stage production.

The comments

While scripts and articles take some time to write, in the world of the online comment, immediacy reigns. It is the speed of reaction, the ability to top the last comment, that is pre-eminent. This introduces a fascinating new energy in Reception Studies, where we have the instant response made possible by Twitter and Instagram, the immediacy of Facebook and the urgent aggression of the online comment thread.

When I submitted my article to ArtsHub,⁴ the editor commented: 'This will put the cat among the pigeons.' Naively, I was doubtful about this. For all that my argument on the gendered nature of translation and Reception was robustly phrased, I thought the only provocative element was that I, as an artist, had broken the cardinal rule of replying to critics. The torrent of online commentary in response to it came as a total surprise and made me seriously reconsider what is at stake when we talk about critical reception and Classical Reception.

The hundred comments could be categorized under four main themes: the *ad feminam*; the role of the critic's subjectivity and duty; the responsibility to the author; the role of gender. The comment thread weaves in and out of these subjects as new contributors join and earlier arguments are adopted and discarded, and in so doing demonstrates the complexity of Reception in all its myriad hermeneutic pathways.⁵

The *ad feminam*s began in social media where I was called 'an absolute arsehole' and my article was attacked for making a critic feel 'antagonized'. In the comment thread, I was criticized for having responded at all. Two of the negative critics dismissed my argument as 'a load of pretentious nonsense', described me as 'a pretentious wanker', and stated that the article 'reek[ed] of "I am a classicist and therefore I know better than you" elitism'.

Byron Bache, one of the most vociferous critics of the production, took to the comments page with a robust attack:

That Jane Montgomery Griffiths spent more than 1,500 words explaining why she's infallible, the male critics were universally wrong and the critical consensus was a vicious sexist attack against her while making assertions instead of arguments, and offering no evidence speaks only to her victim complex and nothing more.

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This was rebutted by critic Alison Croggon (one of the positive reviewers) who argued that Bache had misread my article:

And way to misrepresent an essay, btw. JMG ... was pointing out that artistic decisions that were rendered as “mistakes” were actually the result of conscious thought, which in many cases wasn’t taken into account by the critics who responded; and she is arguing that this is a gendered phenomenon. And there wasn’t a “critical consensus”, there was a yawning critical division, which was strikingly gendered.

This line of defence was picked up by ‘Tennessee’, who criticized Drouyn for her accusation that *Antigone* was ‘self-indulgent’ and noted the personal nature of the attack:

I can only assume that your label ‘self indulgence’ is actually referring to the production as an extension of Jane Griffiths, who you have already called a ‘pretentious wanker’ presumably for daring to be both writer AND performer (and, perhaps, classicist if your snide remarks about academia are any indication). That this is your choice of critique only serves to prove the implication of Griffiths’ article because it is a critique usually reserved for women who refuse to [be] pigeon-holed or mansplained into submission.

‘Tennessee’ also argued with Bache for patriarchal misinterpretation:

I triple checked and at no point does [Griffiths] tell the critics that they are wrong ... Her concern is not with the fact that said critics disliked her play, but that the mode of engagement betrays a double standard that many female professionals are familiar with ... it’s hard to believe that the critique of the work isn’t coming from a place of sexism and patriarchal condescension.

In this strand of the commentary, emotions flared and contributors variously accused each other of being ‘condescending’, ‘patronizing’, ‘ignorant’, ‘facetious’, ‘elitist’, ‘belligerent’, (immature), ‘self-aggrandizing’, with one comment from Drouyn, who made what the Artshub moderator described as ‘inappropriate assertions regarding another person’s mental health’, subsequently deleted by the moderator. A nerve had clearly been touched, and passions were enflamed.

The second strand wove the personal attack into an argument on the subjectivity and responsibility of the critic. For Drouyn and Bache, the primary responsibility of the critic was to provide the audience with a sense of whether the theatre production is sufficiently entertaining to be value for money:

This whole idea of critics accepting and respecting the Artist’s (with a capital A) objectives is sheer amateur nonsense. Our duty is to the audience who pays good money to see a show first and foremost. ... in the role of critic I have an obligation to the audience first, and my own integrity second.

This was echoed by Bache. As a critic, he is 'more interested in engaging with execution than intent':

Griffiths' play failed to reach some of its audience ... because it didn't speak to them. I thought – and still think – that *Antigone* was bad theatre. ... For me, nothing about it worked. ... Theatre that cannot translate its makers' intent into a dramatic and visual grammar its audience understands is bad theatre.

As Bache summarizes, the production was 'cold, intellectual and solipsistic' and 'felt academic, mannered and airless'. Most damningly for Bache, 'It was boring', a condemnation complementing Drouyn's reasons for hating the production:

I hated [*Antigone*] for its pretension and overall failure to engage ... Perhaps we define "entertainment" differently. It would be a gross mistake to assume that Sophocles didn't write *Antigone* as entertainment for the people of Thebes [sic].

In contrast, critics Alison Croggon and Jane Howard (an independent arts commentator who did not write about the production but later published on the crisis in Australian theatre criticism) saw the responsibility of the reviewer as one of engagement with the ideas behind the work. Part of this duty involves an interrogation of the reviewer's own subjectivity and interrogation of the work's context, as Croggon states:

surely critics should be more reflective about the work they are writing about? I have always considered research and background, the placing in context of artistic judgment, to be part of a critic's job. ... [As] a professional theatre critic for 25 years ... I've served both audiences and artists by seriously discussing the work I've seen, informing and challenging my own subjectivity as I went. I think that is what serious critics do.

Drouyn and Bache's responses to this alternative view of the critic's role in turn rested on relativism, definitions of entertainment and the unassailability of subjectivity:

You are looking for a *Mea Culpa*. ... a 'you are right and I am wrong' response. EVERYONE is Right ... every viewpoint is VALID, including mine and Ms Griffiths and Byron's and yours. They are all perception. My perception is that the central core of the *Antigone* story was damaged by this production.

Bache responds:

I don't think any of the critics who reviewed *Antigone* negatively missed the point. There's often a gender divide in the critical response to a work; a product of nature, nurture, subjectivity and the overwhelming, omnipresent patriarchal nature of the world inside and outside our own heads.

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At the same time, however: '[c]ritics aren't adjudicators, dramaturgs or social workers. Criticism is, in and of itself, entertainment.'

Croggon's response demonstrates a different sense of the role of criticism, one that advocates for informed debate rather than 'brute personal opinion':

What's disappointing ... is that this discussion, which could be an illuminating excavation of your viewpoints in relation to others who disagree with you, becomes instead a defensive assertion of your right to think what you like, while waving at your assumed authority.

Howard summarizes this critical dilemma:

These comments, I fear, give rise to the biggest fallacy that 'subjective criticism' has given us: that because a review is subjective, it cannot be questioned. ... of course we need to understand criticism can only come from a place of subjectivity – but integral to that is the act of interrogating your position of subjectivity and where that stands in relation to the artist's objectives.

As adaptation, translation and auteur theories demonstrate, this conflict of subjectivity and intentionality is at the core of Reception, and particularly Classical Performance Reception, where fidelity from source to target text is constantly questioned in translational equivalence and theatrical contingency.

The third strand of the argument moved on to fidelity. Drouyn brings up the translator's duty of care to the author:

I would also remind Ms Griffith [sic] that any translation should be about protecting the writer's intent. The Creator (Sophocles) deserves that much respect in any adaptation.

'Tennessee' responds with a succinct summary of the key arguments of Reception Studies, citing 'the death of the author', the implications of textual transmission on claims of authenticity, the redundancy of intentional fallacy, and the hermeneutics of Reception:

Even if the adaptation were more of a translation, it's impossible to invoke some kind of 'original' because

- 1) the ancient Greek texts have been so altered by layers of translation over time and intentional changes by scribes that it's impossible to say what Sophocles ever actually intended.
- 2) words, like texts, don't have fixed meanings.
- 3) meaning is not inherent but rather created at the point of reception.
- 4) as you argue below, there are 'no absolute truths, and her truth (and yours) are just as valid as mine' or, indeed, Sophocles'.

This is dismissed by Drouyn, who proffers an essentialist view of textual meaning:

... as a writer who has seen my own work bastardised through 'interpretation' it's not one I subscribe to. ... Interpretation is created at the point of reception ... but MEANING (a totally different kettle of fish) is inherent in the text ... That's our intent. There have been enough versions that DID protect such intent. The play has moved me on at least three previous occasions in different productions. It didn't this time.

These 'versions' to which Drouyn refers include one 'straight' production of *Antigone*, one adaptation of it, and Anouilh's '1960s TV version.' Her conflation of these as versions of the same play are interesting, given the substantial differences between Sophocles' and Anouilh's texts. For Keith Gow, an online reviewer, contextual interpretation supersedes intentional fallacy:

Productions of Sophocles are always going to be interpretation/adaptation, even if someone chose to stage it in the Ancient Greek. Texts and stories evolve over centuries and millennia. ...

I personally think there's a point at which if a text isn't allowed to evolve, it will remain unproduced.

The final word in this section should rest with 'Sarah', who succinctly addresses Drouyn's concerns about respect for the author:

lol I think the rather dead Sophocles is gonna be cool with whatever you do with it ... Shakespeare's also dead so I don't think he has an opinion on Queen Lear. Or, you know, indoor theatres. And stage lights. And women being on stage. And Australian accents. And Australia.

The final thread of the comments brings together all the strands so far summarized, and in so doing, demonstrates the complex web of subjectivities, presumptions, biases and prejudices we bring to Reception. In following the comments so far, it is surprising that an adaptation of a 2,500-year-old play, which had much more direct translation in it than any of the critics noticed, could elicit quite so much passion. Perhaps, though, this becomes understandable when we consider what is at stake in the broader themes of this argument. We are dealing here not so much with a discussion on Classical Reception, as with one about our own identities – how we perceive others, ourselves, and how we wish others to perceive us. Integral to this is our relationship with the politics of gender.

The major criticism levelled at me by Bache and Drouyn was that I had accused them of being 'sexist'. In re-reading my original article, I would argue that is a reductive account of my critique: I never used the term, but instead accused them of being either unable or unwilling to be open to interpreting through a female lens that opens up different

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hierarchical possibilities for understanding. Their responses demonstrate an interesting mixture of passion and contempt, while unwittingly proving my accusation.

For Drouyn, my argument is ‘utter bullshit’. After proffering her credentials as a second-wave feminist and writer on *Prisoner Cell Block H* (originally titled *Prisoner* in Australia, a cult classic that screened from 1979 to 1986), she slams what she considers to be the problem with feminism today:

Older women like myself and Helen Garner are saddened that feminism has come to mean something totally different in the last thirty years or so. The movement was intended to elevate women, not denigrate men ... or their viewpoint ... This production pushed a feminine agenda ... I admire Helen Garner’s honesty in saying some time ago ... ‘What have we (The women’s movement) done to men?’ I would add ‘What do we continue to do?’ with this simplistic ‘women are right, men are wrong’ essay.

Bache acknowledges the critical gender divide, and that it is worth noting, but sees the critical polarity as a sign of the adaptation’s failure:

If my work had largely been loved by one gender and rejected by the other, I’d be interested in interrogating my failings. The theatre maker’s job is to engage the audience. If your work speaks only to women, and you intended for it to speak to men, it may be that you got it wrong.

This is a point picked up by ‘John’, who misrepresents my point about girls ‘translating’ the grand male narrative, and turns it round to suggest that, *ergo*, men cannot find meaning in female work:

You said that women and girls are incapable of finding meaning in Homer or Sophocles unless they reinterpret it as femalecentric, and you said they are very good at doing that. So by your understanding of gender, men shouldn’t get much out of your female interpretations.

‘There is, fundamentally, a difference between a gendered worldview and a sexist attack’, says Bache, and he is right. This whole debate, I would argue, is not about sexism, but about a certain ‘gendered worldview’ refusing to engage with a similarly gendered, but very different, alternative worldview. Croggon strongly defends the need to interrogate this different ‘worldview’ and explicates the difficulties met by theatre-makers who offer these alternative perspectives:

It’s difficult to ‘remake and restage gender for women and queer artists when most of the modes of critique are themselves deeply inflected by gendered assumptions: the constant frustration of being read through a matrix which erases the very point the work is making’. It’s this invisibility in critique of the very reason for the

work's existence that is under question here. And this is a question entirely aside from whether or not you liked a piece. . . . it's the total failure to address or perceive those existential questions about a work of art that is at issue here: indeed, you claim in your review of *Antigone*, for instance, that there is no 'why' at all. The 'why' is a feminist interrogation of language and power, which was perfectly obvious to some other critics. I'm surprised you think that gender doesn't play into this, since it so manifestly does.

At the core of this strand is the question of what is 'a feminist interrogation.' For me, it is one that shifts paradigms and prompts alternative interpretations of both the text and the hegemonic structures surrounding it. This definition finds its counter in Drouyn, who repeatedly returns to the theme of how the feminist narrative should 'elevate women':

... you appear to be overlooking the fact that they [*Antigone* and *Creon*] are FAMILY. *Creon* is, in this case, her AUNT, a blood relative. In my world, women who decimate their family members in the name of power are totally reprehensible . . . and *Sophocles* did not come down on one side or the other. . . . he let the audience decide who was right. *Creon*, in fact, has a powerful argument about the upholding of the laws of the state. He is at least righteous, if misguided. It was the ambiguity which made the dilemma so powerful for so many centuries . . . In this production, far from being complex, it comes down to the Evil Witch against *Snow White*. The argument is lessened by the two dimensional painting of black and white. I like to think women are better than that . . . that we have a sense of nurture which goes in tandem with our power, our strength. That one doesn't . . . or shouldn't, negate the other . . . Making *Creon* female lessens *Antigone* and throws into relief how vicious women can be to each other.

This argument is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, the adaptation kept virtually all of *Creon's* arguments from *Sophocles* intact. The only alteration was the omission of *Creon's* overt misogyny and addition of some intertextual references to Anouilh by which The Leader repeatedly gave *Antigone* the chance to change her mind if she would only compromise and accept an ambivalent *bonheur*. Drouyn fails to notice the irony of her argument: whereas political rhetoric from a man's mouth is 'powerful', making him 'righteous', those same words put into a woman's mouth make her 'two dimensional' and an 'Evil Witch'. There is a piquancy to this in the Australian context, where our only female Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, was, before being ousted, subject to a barrage of misogynistic attacks, not least of which being the Opposition's labelling her a 'witch'. Secondly, we have an interestingly essentialist view that women must necessarily have 'a sense of nurture'. *Creon* in this version, as *Antigone's* aunt, should make different decisions from the *Creon* who was *Antigone's* uncle; her decisions should be based on 'the personal' not 'the political'. Again, we have the double standards: whereas the male *Creon* was 'righteous if misguided', the female *Creon* who does exactly the same thing is 'entirely reprehensible'.

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Croggon refutes these arguments, pointing to the deep irony running subtextually through the female Creon's characterization:

Reading your review . . . you say this: 'In making the gender switch what we have instead is the abstract theme of power (politics) versus humanity; but there's also a rather nasty sense of how women, rather than supporting each other, are prepared to back-stab those closest to them to get what they want. Creon says "It's not personal, it's just politics"; the writer missing the point that if Creon is a female then it SHOULD be personal, at least on a subtextual level.'

I argue that switching the gender of Creon made the gender politics more complex, allowing for leaders such as Margaret Thatcher or Julie Bishop, who explicitly eschew feminism but are nevertheless prominent women. And you clearly missed the irony of Creon saying that her decisions are 'not personal'. Which suggests that Montgomery Griffiths . . . might have a point here in how you're reading the gender politics – that it's considered a negative if the woman doesn't fit traditional feminine roles, if she's unsympathetic, for example, and if she embodies actual state power. And that it isn't even feminist if the politics are more complex than simple binaries!

Drouyn's final comments in this thread are perhaps most telling in terms of the tussle between different definitions of feminism and the double standards implicit in some gendered readings:

And I was harsh not because of being unfairly influenced by gender bias. . . . but because my bias for my own gender led to me expecting MORE from a woman's voice.

This resolutely confirms Croggon's argument:

Even given its generally hostile reception, however, you can mount a pretty good argument that avant garde theatre made by men, even if it generates resistance, is received differently. Avant garde theatre that deals with gender – not only but especially if it's made by women – hits sexism as well as the resistance to the new . . .

Afterlife

As it turns out, the comments after my article have become as ephemeral as the production they debate. Just as in textual transmission, the authority of the text must deal with the vicissitudes of time, *recensio* and *emendatio*, so the online blog commentary must deal with the trials of online transmission. As I write this, the comments page has disappeared from the ArtsHub website; two days ago, it was there for the world, should it have been so inclined, to see. In looking to the immediacy of social media commentary for grist to the r/Reception mill, the scholar needs to take note that there is as much

contingency surrounding the transmission of online text as there ever was in the reception of an ancient source text. There is an afterlife, however. One of my favourite comments in the thread came from 'Betteraccess':

You know, there probably is a good theatrical piece to be written about this sort of thing. An entertaining story about the complex relationships between critics in the Melbourne performing arts scene :)

Fast-forward a year to the preparations for *Wild Bore*, and Adrienne Truscott takes up this challenge, emailing me:

Your arts hub article caught my eye while I was in the States thinking a lot about how an artist can maturely process 'bad' reviews – which I had recently received – and attempt to accept that while some of the observations about my own work might be accurate, the same critical eye – mine – that might observe misogyny and privilege in our culture and thus perhaps shapes my own art does not disappear when I am interpolating a review that accompanies the work.

Your discussion of the inherited mandate that women interpolate and translate constantly in order to make space for our work and even our physical bodies was such a forthright and clear reminder that this is indeed a universal issue and discussion for female artists. And the impassioned – to say the least – online discussion that followed its publication was such an incredibly brilliant and ironic illustration of precisely what you were talking about it sort of blew my mind.

Truscott, pers. comm. 19 July 2017

So through one of those brilliantly cyclical quirks of fate that seem to be at the core of Reception and intertextuality, an adaptation of an ancient play (itself an example of Classical Reception) becomes a minor critical cause célèbre in its critical afterlife, only to be transformed into another work of theatre where the meta-commentary on criticism, performance and the female aesthetic is so profoundly interwoven that it covers more ground on performance and reception theory in its eighty minutes of scatological playing time than any academic chapter, online article, or commentary thread.

Byron Bache's review of *Antigone* began with the unforgettable line:

There comes a point when you're watching a playwright, playing the antagonist in her own play, running endless loops around the set as she tears off her pantyhose, that you begin to wonder 'why?'

The moment Bache describes is when The Leader hears news of Haemon's death and tries to escape from it, running to the point of collapse and vomiting. For Bache, this was quite clearly an unsuccessful image of grief. But his description now becomes a running (literally and metaphorically) motif through *Wild Bore*. Truscott's response to the line in

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the script is perhaps the best conclusion to this whole debate. Half-way through the show, after a series of increasingly surreal vignettes on criticism and the artists being misunderstood, Truscott, seemingly dressed 'as a giant baby in a tuxedo', chats to the audience in monologue. Her riff on the line, for all its intended absurdity, summarizes exactly what this whole post-*Antigone* debate has demonstrated: entrenched opinion, unquestioned subjectivities, and yet the fabulously exciting possibility – possibility that Reception Studies offers us – of acknowledging with openness the symbiotic relationship between perception, interpretation and subjectivity:

The other day I was reading a review – that described 'a naked woman running endless loops around the stage as she tears at her pantyhose' and I thought ... Really? Was that actually what she was doing, or was that what the reviewer saw?

Were they just loops and was she just tearing at her pantyhose? Were the loops actually endless?? Because that's not actually possible unless she's still actually running.

One suddenly can't be sure if that actually happened or if the description is a metaphor, or reveals an inability to see what has actually happened or an inability to see the actual as a metaphor or to see metaphor as commentary. What if the naked woman was intentionally baffling her elders by speaking in a secret coded language known as theatre?

Maybe there was something else in the endless loops of the naked woman?

Surely there was! One needn't be able to resolve the endless social commentary of the nude female body in order to see SOME, ANY meaning in it. The possibilities of interpretation are actually endless ...

But what if you choose not to see or to only see what you already know how to see, or what if you don't even know how to see what you've never seen?

To see or not to see maybe that's the goddamned question!

How thrilling to see the previously unseen! If there's an actor who walks like an anchovy and looks like an unmade bunk bed, even if that's a metaphor, well I'd fucking like to actually see that!

Then again, if for no apparent reason all YOU can see on stage right now is a baby in a tuxedo ... Well you're wrong!

That's not what it is at ALL maybe it's an anchovy that looks like an unmade bunkbed!

PART III
POETRY AND CLASSICAL ECHOES IN
NEW ZEALAND

CHAPTER 7

JAMES K. BAXTER AND THE GORGON MOON

Geoffrey Miles

Of all New Zealand writers, probably the most obsessively engaged with classical mythology was the poet, playwright, social critic and counter-cultural guru James K. Baxter (1926–72). He was never a Classicist in the academic sense (having little respect in any case for academic qualifications).¹ But he was a voracious reader with a retentive if erratic memory, brought up from childhood first on retellings of Greek and Norse mythology, later Homer, Virgil and Ovid, as well as the canonical English and Scots poets. ‘That was an indispensable education,’ Baxter recalled in his autobiographical essay ‘Notes on the Education of a New Zealand Poet.’ The mythical stories became an ineradicable part of his imagination and fundamental building blocks of his poetry, as much as the ‘[w]aves, rocks, beaches, flax bushes, rivers, cattle flats’ of his native Otago landscape (Baxter 1967: 132). Classical references are ubiquitous in his poetry, plays, and prose, both published and unpublished.² His use of classical myth is comparatively conventional in his juvenilia, becomes more complex and personal in his mature poetry, and reaches its peak in the 1960s; in the pared-down and colloquial poetry of his final years it becomes rarer, but correspondingly more striking in its sparer context.

The classical influence on Baxter was not necessarily unusual for a New Zealand poet of his generation. Colonial New Zealand inherited the English public school emphasis on Latin and Greek as cornerstones of a liberal education; each of the nation’s four original universities instituted professorial chairs in Classics at their foundation, and Latin was a compulsory subject for the BA up to 1917, only nine years before Baxter’s birth (Pollock 2014). It is only natural, therefore, to find references to classical mythology, or echoes and imitations of classical poems, in the work of New Zealand poets born in the first half of the twentieth century, such as A. R. D. Fairburn, R. A. K. Mason, Denis Glover, C. K. Stead, Fleur Adcock and Vincent O’Sullivan (see *Classical New Zealand Poetry* 1985 for a handy selection). That tradition is carried on, despite the decline of Classics, in some more recent New Zealand writing: for example, Ian Wedde’s Horatian *Commonplace Odes*, the blended allusions to classical and Māori myth in Witi Ihimaera’s novels, the mythological underpinnings of Margaret Mahy’s young adult fiction or the Catullan variations of Anna Jackson (the last two discussed elsewhere in this volume). Baxter’s classical engagement is unusual only in its depth and volume.

It was unfortunate for Baxter’s critical reputation, however, that his emergence as a major poet coincided with the rise of a literary nationalist movement. Its principal champion, Allen Curnow, argued that New Zealand literature must be based in New

Zealand reality, rejecting external traditions and influences: 'Reality is local and special Whatever is true vision belongs here, specifically to the islands of New Zealand' (Curnow 1960: 17). Baxter's European Romanticism and in particular his heavy use of classical myth made him a particular target for criticism by this movement; Curnow, who had at first hailed him as a brilliant new voice, came to see his poetry as 'a throwback to the make-believe art of earlier generations' (Curnow 1960: 62). The cultural nationalist view of New Zealand literature became orthodoxy, and Curnow set the tone for decades of critical response to Baxter, and in particular to his use of mythology. The conventional view was that it was at best a weakness in his work, at worst a symptom of an essential falsity and hollowness. Critics referred to his 'heavy baggage of Classics' (Goulter 1980: 124), his mythic 'paraphernalia' (Brasch 1966: 22), his 'parading [of] classical learning' (Sharp 1994: 13), his unhelpful reliance on 'alien, time-smothered, and now cryptic myth' (Smith 1973: 12).

In *The Snake-Haired Muse: James K. Baxter and Classical Myth*, John Davidson, Paul Millar and I set out to challenge this critical prejudice and – by surveying the whole of Baxter's work, including his unpublished poems – to explore, explain and perhaps rehabilitate his use of classical figures as a key aspect of his poetic practice.³ The present chapter is an offshoot of that project, and focuses on a mythological motif that was only dealt with in passing in *The Snake-Haired Muse* but which offers an unusually clear window into Baxter's idiosyncratic approach to myth. The chapter deals with his treatment of the moon, and of the Graeco-Roman moon goddess, Artemis/Diana.⁴ It explores Baxter's depiction of the moon and Diana both as benevolent and, much more emphatically, as malevolent and destructive. I suggest that the clue to the paradoxes of Baxter's moon figures is their association with the idea of chaos, and that this accounts for the startling way in which the moon, in Baxter's late poetry, becomes associated not with Diana but with the supremely benevolent Christian figure of the Virgin Mary.

One of the most curious features of Baxter's mythography is his tendency to view his key figures and images in diametrically contradictory ways. Prometheus, for instance, can be both the heroic rebel-artist and the soulless technocratic politician (Miles, Davidson and Millar 2011: 30–1, 58–61); the Underworld can be alternatively or simultaneously an image of entrapment, sterility and despair, or of the unconscious mind from which the springs of inspiration arise (222–39). In this paradoxical approach he was in tune with one of his major influences, Carl Gustav Jung. In *Science of Mythology*, written in collaboration with the mythographer Carl Kérenyi, Jung writes of the 'duplex' or 'bipolar' quality of psychic figures, which 'oscillate between their positive and negative meanings' (Jung and Kérenyi 2002: 186). Kérenyi applies this generalization to the Olympian gods. Apollo, he points out, embodies both light and darkness, Dionysus both life and death, Zeus both might and right. Such divine figures 'have contradictory aspects for the very reason that their structure combines contradictions in perfect equilibrium' (123; see also Miles, Davidson and Millar 2011: 30). Baxter's treatment of the moon goddess is a particularly striking example of this 'bipolar' quality, as it moves back and forth between opposite poles of positive and negative meaning.

Of course, Artemis/Diana is already a complex and contradictory figure in classical myth and religion. The Greek Artemis has been described as exhibiting such ‘stark contrasts’ that ‘the different facets of her being seem to us almost incompatible’. She is both a protector of wild beasts and a huntress, a virgin and a patroness of childbirth, a helper and a slayer (through her arrows of disease) of young women (Hjerrild 2009: 41–2). Her paradoxical fertility function is dominant in the eastern ‘Diana of the Ephesians’, the supposedly many-breasted figure who becomes a common symbol of Nature (Nielsen 2009).⁵ Artemis/Diana’s identity becomes more complex and blurred as she absorbs aspects of other goddesses, taking over from the shadowy Selene the function of moon goddess (as her brother Apollo takes over that of Sun God from Hyperion), and also merging with the mysterious and fearsome witch-goddess Hekate, to become a ‘Triple Goddess’, Diana on earth, Luna in the sky, Hekate in the Underworld – and hence sometimes identified by Christian commentators with the Holy Trinity (Bumble 1998: 101).⁶ As moon goddess, she can embody any of the various qualities that humankind have over millennia attributed to the moon: cold inhuman remoteness; beauty and unattainable desirability; fickleness and inconstancy; tidal control over the irrational forces of love and madness; or the lifeless barrenness perceived by modern science.

Baxter’s ambivalent view of the moon goddess is most explicit in ‘To My Father’, a poem written in 1954 but not published until Millar salvaged it for his *Selected Poems* in 2010. After greeting his father as ‘more than dearest friend’, and acknowledging the poem as ‘Uncouthly made . . . In Burns’s metre’ (Archibald Baxter had taught his son a love for Robert Burns’s poetry), he invokes the moon:

Above the hill, a curd in whey,
 The moon rides in the nether sky,
 Of Dionysiac poetry
 The Muse and mother;
 She chills and kindles with her eye
 My heart’s blown feather.

Often I’ve seen in the clouds’ race
 Her ancient, mottled, carline face
 Bare to the winds of outer space,
 A deathshroud staring
 On human wit and human grace
 Cold and uncaring.

But now like Venus in her shell,
 Not past the quarter, she bodes well
 For man and beast, casting her spell
 O’er sea and land;
 The winds that hurtled wild and snell
 Wait her command.

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The moon appears first as an ancient hag or witch ('carline'), her cold white face like a skull, as coldly indifferent or hostile to human aspirations as 'the winds of outer space'. Then, by contrast, she is seen rising from the waves like 'Venus in her shell' in Botticelli's painting, a figure of beauty and grace, calming the wild winds and casting a benevolent spell over the earth. This more benign vision is developed through the following six stanzas, as the moon's light is seen blessing and caressing the harmless creatures of the night (owls, hedgehogs, baby opossums in their nests), non-judgementally 'conniving' at the actions of burglars and illicit lovers, blessing the poet's own 'two weans' as they sleep, and finally shining on himself and his father, divided by space and by their way of life, but joined in the 'fond light' of the moon: 'May our two minds the same light learn/With which Love's luminaries burn.' By implication the moon is one of 'Love's luminaries'.

In the cheerful, celebratory 'To My Father' the benevolent vision of the moon is emphasized. More often in Baxter's work the reverse is true. In 'To the Moon' (N15.74), an unpublished sonnet written around 1949, the darker vision predominates:

Turn from my window, O unchanging face
Furrowed with age, but never tears – your dry
Sockets have seen doom-maddened armies die,
Hope and remorse in this blood-haunted place
Unmoved. No, not the virgin huntress' grace
Of glimmering limbs, rather the Gorgon's eye,
Whose loveless brow must burn and petrify
Washed by the sterile winds of outer space.
Turn from my window then, you comfortless.
I am no Perseus, gentle to destroy
Ending your vigil. Here in smothering darkness
Sleep child and woman, mine, the dear alloy
More precious than your silver-stony tress;
Here lies the scope and seed of mortal joy.

Here the classical image of Artemis/Diana is evoked only to be rejected ('No, not the virgin huntress' grace/Of glimmering limbs'), and replaced by the image of the moon as Gorgon, looking down cold and unmoved upon the sufferings of humanity. The poem is propitiatory, apotropaic; disavowing any claim to be a Gorgon-slaying Perseus, the poet begs the moon to keep her 'silver-stony tress' (a vivid image of moonlight as Medusa's hair) away from his wife and child – one of the 'two weans' who are blessed by the moonlight in the later poem – and not to burn or petrify their 'mortal joy' with her immortal, inhuman despair.

Neither of these poems names Artemis or Diana, associating the moon instead with other mythological figures, benevolent (Venus) or malevolent (the Gorgon). When Diana (Baxter prefers her Roman name) is explicitly summoned up, she is almost always seen as fearsome. In Baxter's only novel *Horse*, for example, as the semi-

autobiographical protagonist sets out on a night on the town, 'A wild moon hung over the harbour and the town, inhuman among the hurrying clouds, coming from nowhere and going nowhere, the horned Diana of sex and death' (Baxter 1985: 30). The attribution of the moon's horns to the goddess herself creates a suggestion of monstrosity. More openly monstrous is the vision of the goddess suffered by two 'moonstruck' drunks staggering along a country road in 'Tarras Moon' (1947–51; Baxter 2004: 112–13):⁷

Grim in her graveshift
The bare poxy wanton,
Queen Death glowered from a rift
Of cloudwrack above the mountain,
Walking on wild air.

'Ripe archaic' her feature
From a Sicilian metope,
Two snakes for a knotted rope
About her middle: the creature
That eats our carrion hope:
Glass of malignant Nature,
Diana chastely fair.

The final phrase, with its echoes of Elizabethan lyrics such as Ben Jonson's 'Queen and huntress chaste and fair', comes in with an effect of savage irony when applied to this terrifying embodiment of death, madness, and despair. The reference to a 'Sicilian metope' probably alludes to the famous Archaic carving from a temple at Selinus that depicts Perseus beheading a grinning, moon-faced Medusa – another implicit image of the Gorgon moon.⁸

The strange association of the virgin Diana with 'sex and death', and her depiction as a sexually predatory 'wanton', is intensified in 'Black Water' (N22.74, 1962), in which the romantic myth of Endymion is transmuted into a grim vision of moonlight on the body of a drowned suicide:

Beyond Kapiti, her cheeks bone-white,
Wearing her serpent girdle,
Diana crosses the dark sea, to ride
One who welters in the waves' cradle,
A lawyer from Balclutha,
Whom conscience, whisky and his third divorce
Tumbled from the ferry to black water.
She mounts that old Endymion like a horse
In the astride position.
His two dead eyes like discs of paua glisten.⁹

It would be easy to read these dark images of Artemis/Diana in the light of Baxter's misogyny, his weirdly conflicted attraction and repulsion towards female sexuality, and his Catholic association of sexual desire with fallen nature. The image of 'the horned Diana of sex and death' suggests how inextricably sexuality and mortality are joined together in Baxter's imagination; they are, one might say, the horns of the dilemma that humanity is impaled on. I would not disagree with this line of analysis; but there is, I would argue, another dimension to Baxter's moon symbolism beyond the sexual.

A starting point might be a passage that Baxter wrote to his friend and later editor John Weir, who was writing a Master's thesis on his poetry, concerning the unpublished 1967 poem 'The Martian'. The poem, which is about the suicide of a teenage 'teddy boy', contains the lines, 'He has chosen/To die in the lap of the cruel virgin/We call Reality'. Weir asked Baxter who the 'cruel virgin' was, and Baxter replied: 'I suggest – Diana, the moon-goddess.' He adds that in his adolescent poem 'The Unicorn', on a similar theme, the corresponding figure was Aphrodite. The fact that the love goddess and the virgin moon goddess can fulfil the same symbolic role suggests something of the free-and-easy syncretism with which Baxter treats his mythological figures. He goes on:

...[s]he represents an implacable and devouring Reality that confronts the adolescent soul. . . . And this Unblessed Virgin is creation seen as chaos, the emptied and non-sacramental universe which modern man has tried to penetrate, master and understand.

Weir 1968: 118

This is, I think, the central significance of Diana and the moon in Baxter's personal symbolism. The coldly chaste and murderously unforgiving virgin goddess, and the cold, remote, inhuman celestial body 'washed by the sterile winds of outer space', are images associated with what Baxter calls 'chaos', the universe perceived as meaningless and indifferent, a mere collection of phenomena, emptied of meaning or value or divine presence.

For Baxter, 'chaos' was the condition in which most people live most of the time, but especially in the modern world; modern civilization – materialistic, rationalistic, technological, industrial, bureaucratic – was a machine for stripping spiritual significance out of life. Hence the appearance of the moon in his bitter satirical poem 'Wellington' (1949; Baxter 2003: 76–7), describing a city where 'Power breeds on power in labyrinthine hives':

City of flower-pots, canyon streets and trams,
O sterile whore of a thousand bureaucrats!
There is a chasm of sadness behind
Your formal giggle, when the moon opens

Cold doors in space. Here on the dark hill
Above your broken lights – no crucifix

Entreats, but the gun emplacements overgrown
And the radio masts' huge harp of the wind's grief.

The sound of the wind howling through the radio masts (familiar to any Wellingtonian) recalls the 'cold winds of outer space' blowing round the moon in 'To the Moon' and 'To My Father'. Coupled with the surreal image of the moon opening cold doors in space, the imagery suggests the 'chasm' of spiritual emptiness faced by the dwellers in the modern city's 'labyrinthine hives'. The labyrinth is itself a recurrent image in Baxter for spiritual desolation and entrapment (Miles, Davidson and Millar 2011: 137–53).

Baxter defined the importance of 'chaos' in his poetry in a late interview with (again) John Weir:

[W]hen you are dealing with the world you tend to see it as Chaos. Here is a scientist and he looks at the Chaos of the world, the multiple Chaos as it appears to the human mind – perhaps to the eye of God, it is not Chaos at all, but to us it looks like Chaos – and he looks through his scientific lens and through that discipline he gives it an intellectual order. The poet does the same, I think

One has to be pretty close to the fire, I think, pretty close to this position of Chaos. The nearer you are to it and can survive the better. One critic of my verse . . . said that I was like a man who worked very close to the bull, a bullfighter. You almost get grazed by the horns.

Weir 1974: 242–3

It is perhaps not too strained to link that image of the bull's horns with the horns of the moon and 'the horned Diana of sex and death'. The moon is one way in which Baxter conceptualizes the vision of chaos which he (a little self-dramatizingly, perhaps) sees himself to be wrestling with in his poetry.

The confrontation with chaos, then, is both the purpose of Baxter's poetic mission and the driving force out of which he creates his poetry. That is why, when he envisages his Muse, she is usually imagined not as one of the beautiful and gracious goddesses of Greek mythology, but rather as a monstrous and terrifying figure: a 'man-killing Muse' ('A French Letter to Louis Johnson', 1966, N26.62), a 'grim old Lady' ('The Muse (To Louis Johnson)', 1966; Baxter 2004: 352), 'an old black hag with red arachnoid eyes' ('The Muse', 1961; Baxter 2004: 234). In 'Letter to Robert Burns' (1963; Baxter 2004: 289–91) she is 'the snake-haired Muse', a punning compound of the Muse and the Gorgon Medusa, with the Gorgon's snaky hair and petrifying eyes, who comes down from the sky to tell the poet, 'Jimmy . . . , you are my ugliest son;/I'll break you like a herring-bone'. As in 'To My Father', it is the moon – the skull-faced carline figure as well as the benevolent Venus figure – who is described as 'the Muse and mother' of 'Dionysiac poetry', with the power both to 'chill' his heart with fear and to 'kindle' it with poetic inspiration.¹⁰ These incarnations of chaos, which could paralyse Baxter with terror and despair, also goad him into writing poetry in an attempt to wrestle that chaos into order.

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In other words, for Baxter, chaos can be a paradoxically creative force. In Greek myth, the world emerges out of chaos, whether that chaos is conceived as vacancy and absence as in Hesiod's *Theogony*, or as a disordered mixture of elements as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (both classical texts that Baxter knew). Other mythologies have similar concepts – the Norse Ginnungagap (the subject of one of Baxter's earliest poems), the Biblical *tohu* and *bohu*, the Te Kore (nothingness) which begins traditional Māori creation chants. In each case, without the initial chaos, order could never be created. Describing his first experience as a poet in the essay 'Notes on the Education of a New Zealand Poet', Baxter starts off: 'Well – as in all good mythologies – first there was the gap, the void' (Baxter 1967: 122). The importance of 'the gap, the void' in Baxter's poetry was first noted by Millar:

... the hollow place [stands] at the centre of a lifetime of writing. Cave, tomb, gap, void, Wahi Ngaro¹¹ – the list is long but the symbolism is consistent in identifying such apparently empty, lifeless spaces as paradoxically generative places where poems grow.

Millar 2003: 8

More recently Gregory Martin has demonstrated in more detail how Baxter uses the idea of the gap as a crucial poetic tool. Again, and again he generates a poem by first finding or creating a 'gap' – a situation of loss, absence, lack, hollowness, unbridgeable contradiction – and then attempting to shape the chaos of that situation into the order and meaning of poetry (Martin 2013). In his late poetry, drawing on the Christian mystical tradition of *kenosis* or self-emptying, the 'gap' – 'Wahi Ngaro', to use Baxter's Māori term – becomes a focus of spiritual aspiration:

Wahi Ngaro, the gap from which our prayers
Fall back like the toi-toi arrows

Children shoot upwards – Wahi Ngaro,
The limitless, the silent, the black night sky ...

'Autumn Testament' 4; Baxter 2004: 542

Wahi Ngaro is an image of the unknowability of God, in which our individual human egos are swallowed up. In this way, in the late poetry, chaos or emptiness becomes something that the poet consciously pursues, because only by passing through it can he attain true wisdom.

It sounds bizarre to say that, for Baxter, the moon is a kind of gap. But the idea is there almost explicitly in 'Wellington', when 'the moon opens/Cold doors in space' (the stanza break creating a literal gap within the metaphor); the open door in space mirrors the 'chasm of sadness' within the city. Baxter's moon, there and elsewhere, is an empty, lifeless, anti-place, a kind of black (or rather white) hole, which functions as an emblem

of what he called ‘the emptied and non-sacramental universe’. Yet that emptiness becomes, in Millar’s phrase, ‘paradoxically generative’.

To understand this connection in Baxter’s imagination between the moon and the ‘gap’ helps to explain a strange turn in some of his later poetry, where the moon becomes associated not with Diana but with the Virgin Mary. The shift is explicit in ‘Mary at Ephesus’ (Baxter 2004: 383), a 1967 poem first published in the Catholic magazine *The Tablet*. The poem is built around the association of Ephesus not only with the cult of Artemis/Diana, but also with the Virgin Mary. In Christian legend, she was held to have lived there in the years between the Crucifixion and her own death or ‘Assumption’ into heaven; an ancient house traditionally identified as hers is a major site of Catholic pilgrimage. Baxter draws a comparison and contrast between Diana and Mary:

and if Diana’s city
is now itself a tombstone
and the scorpion master,
a greater than Diana
draws down to earth the broad sun
century by century,

whom one might now see slowly
from station to station go,
behind her house (a woman
black-clad like the darkened moon)
holding in her heart’s furrow
the blood drops of Calvary.

While explicitly exalting Mary as ‘a greater than Diana’, the poem also transfers to her the moon imagery associated with her pagan rival (‘a woman/black-clad like the darkened moon’), and goes one better in attributing to her the power to ‘[draw] down to earth the broad sun’. As Baxter noted in his commentary on the poem, there is ‘a pious pun’ on *sun* and *Son* (Baxter 2015: 287): as the moon draws down the sun’s reflected light to earth, Mary mediates her son Christ’s grace to humankind.

The imagery is developed in ‘The Moon and the Chestnut Tree’ (1971; Baxter 2004: 396–8). This is a poem from Baxter’s final period, when he had abandoned the conventional literary life, and his family, to run a commune at Hiruhama or Jerusalem, a remote settlement on the Waikato River. The local community was mainly Māori, as were many of the commune’s residents, and Baxter had taken on the Māori name ‘Hemi’ (a version of ‘James’).¹² Baxter’s embrace of Māoritanga (Māori culture and values) was something that occurred gradually. In the 1950s he took a defensively Eurocentric view of suggestions that New Zealand poets should incorporate Māori culture and mythology in their work: ‘There is no reason, actually, why a New Zealand poet should use Polynesian symbolism rather than the Greek myths of Orpheus and Prometheus, or the medieval legend of Faustus’ (Baxter 1960: 62). But his marriage to the Māori poet and short story

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writer J. C. (Jacquie) Sturm, and his contact with disadvantaged and dispossessed young urban Māori in Wellington and Auckland, drew him increasingly toward Māoridom. He was attracted to the Māori sense of tribal (iwi) identity, something that had been crucial to Baxter since childhood; in ‘Conversation with an Ancestor’ he refers to his Highland ancestors as ‘the only tribe I know of’, and ruefully describes himself as ‘a tribesman left over from the dissolution of the tribes’ (Baxter 1967: 12). He valued the Māori sense of the sacredness of the land, and the Māori emphasis on *arohanui* (‘the love of the many’). All these things seemed to offer an alternative to the alienating values of the modern urban industrial civilization he loathed, with its ‘depersonalisation, centralisation, desacralisation’ (Baxter 2015: 3. 466).

This did not mean, however, that Māori mythology took the place of classical mythology in his imagination. He never acquired anything like the loving familiarity with traditional Māori myth and legend that he had with the Classics, though he does develop a syncretic habit of mingling and juxtaposing classical and Polynesian images. What we find instead in his late poems is a tendency to render Christian concepts in Māori terms. *Arohanui* appears alongside *agape* and *caritas*; ‘Wahi Ngaro’ becomes a key theological concept. He begins to refer to God as ‘Te Ariki’ (The Lord), Christ as ‘Te Tama’ (The Son), the Virgin Mary as ‘Te Whaea’ (Mother or Auntie).

It is the figure of Te Whaea who dominates in ‘The Moon and the Chestnut Tree’. The name is also applied by the local Māori to a well at the back of the Jerusalem pa (village), which is being blocked by a ‘great boulder’ nicknamed ‘the church’. Though this probably represents a real-life situation, it is also transparently symbolic: the patriarchal, colonialist Church is a rock (St Peter’s rock, perhaps) which is blocking access to the pure spring of Christianity. Baxter imagines Te Whaea (the well and the Virgin herself, inseparably) as

not the blue and white
Lady of our adoration,

But a woman built like a tank (both senses of the word)
Who swears in English at the pakeha truckdriver

And says to me, stroking my beard gently,
‘I can’t help feeling sorry for you.’

Te Whaea/Mary is both formidable and dangerous as a military tank, and a source of spiritual refreshment like a tank of water (Baxter’s characteristically ‘duplex’ or ‘bipolar’ treatment of classical mythological figures extending also to Christian ones). In the final section of the poem:

The clear moon in a clear sky
Offers a kind of peace . . .

So I go barefoot

Along the grass tracks below the church,
That shrine of hard work and cleanliness,

And say to the moon, 'Mother, remember us,
Heal for us what we cannot bring together,

'The bright and the dark, the vagrant and the Pharisee,
The pa's love and the church's law.' My feet are very cold.

Here the moon is clearly identified with Te Whaea/Mary, and imagined (like the Venus-moon in 'To My Father') as one of 'Love's luminaries', an embodiment of grace and peace with the potential to reconcile the most irreconcilable divisions.

In some ways, the shift of Baxter's moon imagery from pagan to Christian is a natural one. There is a traditional strain of Catholic imagery that associates the Virgin Mary with the moon; in 'Traveller's Litany' (1954; Baxter 2004: 139–45) Baxter had addressed the 'Most holy Virgin' among other titles as 'Moon of compassion' (145). Given the juxtaposition of Mary and Diana in 'Mary at Ephesus', it is therefore (in a sense) an easy slippage from one virgin moon goddess to another, from the classical virgin huntress to the Christian virgin mother of God. In other ways, of course, this is a radical and paradoxical shift. The moon, which for Baxter has been associated with fear and despair, becomes a symbol of love and hope. The 'Unblessed Virgin', who embodies 'creation seen as chaos' and an empty, unsanctified universe, becomes the Blessed Virgin who embodies divine love and divine grace.

The argument of this chapter has suggested, I hope, that this kind of radical paradox is in fact entirely typical of Baxter's thinking. The transformation of the moon image is just another example of the 'duplex' or 'bipolar' quality of his images, which hold diametrically opposite meanings in tension: just as Prometheus is rebel *and* bureaucrat, and the Underworld is sterility *and* inspiration, so the moon is godless chaos *and* divine love. Moreover, Baxter's poetic practice offers a rationale and justification for these strange juxtapositions. Consciously, systematically, programmatically, he makes his poetry out of confrontation with the things that frighten and repel him: sexuality and mortality and the fear that the universe may be empty and meaningless. These things become 'gaps', fragments of chaos through which he can move towards order and meaning. So, the interstellar darkness of a purely mechanical and scientific universe, the universe onto which the moon 'opens cold doors in space', becomes in the late poems the positive darkness and mystery of 'the darkness I call God,/the darkness I call Te Whaea' ('The Ikons', Baxter 2004: 499); an unblessed universe transformed into a blessed one. By a strange process of metamorphosis, Baxter's idiosyncratic use of classical mythology is not merely reconciled with, but becomes the vehicle for, his equally idiosyncratic kind of Christian mysticism. And the mythology of the moon is a small but significant part of that process.

CHAPTER 8

CLODIA THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Anna Jackson

... the backward glance without which poetry cannot exist

Shane Butler, *The Matter of the Page*: 23

Lewis Carroll's nineteenth-century image of Alice's access to Wonderland through a looking glass seems, on the face of it, not so very different from the way Classical Reception scholars have imagined our contemporary encounters with Greek and Roman literature. The relationship, as Ika Willis (2011) puts it, between 'Now and Rome' has been the focus of a body of theory regarding every reading, like every translation, of a classical text as reflecting a reader situated in a present time and place. Practitioners have often shared this understanding. Josephine Balmer, preparing new translations of Catullus, runs through the versions of Catullus that have been produced for different historical moments – the Renaissance sensualist, the Victorian colonialist, the twentieth-century lover – and asks, 'Who, then, would be my Catullus?' (Balmer 2013: 145). In New Zealand, to take this kind of ownership of Catullus has meant not only bringing Catullus into the present moment but into a New Zealand setting, as C. K. Stead did with his modernist Catullus, all lower-case lettering and line breaks, counting the grains of black sand on Auckland's West Coast beaches.¹ This idea that every translation is a domestication of the original, rehousing the classical text in the local and the present, was the premise of my 2004 collection, *Catullus for Children*; 'versions' of a selection of Catullus poems written from the point of view of a young New Zealand child.²

In the first of the Alice books, we are given a different image for how we might enter another world, a world that is in fact 'down under'. As Alice falls down into a world she supposes must be 'the antipathies' (1865; 2009: 11), she passes shelves and shelves of interesting items lodged into the sides of a deep hole, layers and layers of archaeology. This image might better fit with Shane Butler's proposal to move on from thinking of Classical Reception as relocations into the present, in favour of a 'Deep Classics', acknowledging the layers of time that have come between the readings we can give texts now and the moment of their composition. This theorizing of a 'fragmented, buried, and largely lost ... classical past' (Butler 2016: back cover) emphasizes the obstacles to knowledge it presents and, above all, the value that can be found 'in the very fact that we turn our attention to a distant world we can never fully know' (Butler 2013: unpagged). This valuing of the very obstacles, the very loss, of our relationship to the past has itself a deep history, as Butler recognizes, with his interest, for instance, in the Victorian Classicist John Addington Symonds. It might seem a more unlikely stance for a Modernist to take, yet Virginia Woolf took exactly this stance in her essay 'On Not Knowing Greek',

even though her knowledge was sufficient for her to be able to describe reading, in the original:

... Sappho, with her constellations of adjectives; Plato daring extravagant flights of poetry in the midst of prose; Thucydides, constricted and contracted; Sophocles gliding like a shoal of trout smoothly and quietly, apparently motionless, and then, with a flicker of fins, off and away ...

[1925] 2008: 17

However she might love the language, its compactness of expression, its abruptness and ambiguities, she was conscious of the gap between her understanding of the literature and the literature as it would have been received without 'the haze of associations' (Woolf 1925; 2008: 14) she cannot help but bring to it from her own time and place.

In this chapter, I want to look through the looking glass at my 2014 collection *I, Clodia, and Other Portraits*, which turns again to the poetry of Catullus to prompt a new set of responses. If *Catullus for Children* dramatizes the idea of Reception as domestication, *I, Clodia*, in contrast, dramatizes an understanding of Reception as an ongoing dialogue with the past, in which the relationship between reader and writer is not one of identification, but response. A translator, of course, necessarily takes up the position of the speaker of the poems, but although all readings of Latin literature are necessarily *through* translation, whether through the reader's own translation or through the reading of an already translated text, there is more to reading than translation. A reader might just as reasonably take up the position not of the speaker of the poem they are reading, but of the addressee. If the speaker – Catullus, speaking as 'I' – addresses a second person, 'you', might not the reader imagine themselves being addressed by Catullus just as readily as they might imagine themselves *as* Catullus? There are many examples we can turn to of readers, often themselves poets, who have responded to the poetry they love in this way, feeling addressed by the poet whose work they are reading. This is, for instance, how twentieth-century American poet Allen Ginsberg responds to nineteenth-century poet Walt Whitman's address to his readers, when Whitman calls on his readers to become the poets who would take up where he himself must leave off, advancing a moment 'only to wheel and hurry back in the darkness ... Leaving it to you to prove and define it [the new poetry],/Expecting the main things from you' ('Poets to Come'). Ginsberg responds so directly to the opening Whitman offers that he brings him out of the darkness and into his own poem, 'A Supermarket in California', in which he imagines Whitman 'poking among the meats in the refrigerator and eyeing the/grocery boys'. New Zealand poets like Helen Rickerby and Paula Green have similarly imagined themselves encountering the writers they respond to, as when Rickerby imagines Katherine Mansfield pulling her onto the dance floor at a party (2008: 88), or as when Green imagines Einstein eating sandwiches with her at Bethells Beach, liking both the anchovy dressing, and 'the way/the Tasman Sea lifts the imagination/like an old-fashioned washing machine/willing to take any load' (2013: 15). More even than many translations, these poems are acts of relocation and de-historicization. But it is equally

possible to imagine the dialogue between the writer and the reader taking place not through the relocation of the writer, or speaker, of the poem into the present, but through the reader's own displacement, into the past.

This is the fiction that informs *I, Clodia*, which offers an imagined response to the Lesbia poems of Catullus. Not only, therefore, do I take up the position of the addressee rather than identifying with Catullus, but (unlike Ginsberg, Rickerby or Green) I take up a perspective beyond my own time and place. The Catullus poems themselves are presented as one side of a two-way conversation, asking questions and responding to questions that have already been posed, issuing provocations and reacting to provocations received. *I, Clodia* fills in the other side of the conversation, and in writing as Clodia, rather than identifying myself with Catullus, or bringing Catullus into the present day and home to my own location, I am writing above all as a reader of Catullus. To imagine the poetry Clodia might have written to provoke the Catullus poems means reading the poems in terms of the implied reader they themselves evoke. As William Fitzgerald writes, 'Poetry, and particularly Catullus' poetry, is talk', and the poetry of Catullus 'parades its relation to everyday acts of speech or writing' (1995: 10). Fitzgerald is interested in the less obviously implied addressee, the reader of the poem as eavesdropper, overhearing the poem whose address to another should be read as largely fictional. Fictional or not, however, the performed address to the very specific audience – Lesbia – is what gives the eavesdropping its meaning and its charge. Catullus' poem 7 offers the most straightforward example of how Lesbia is evoked as the audience of poem 5, providing the question that responds to poem 5 and prompts poem 7. My poem 'This business of kissing' simply fills in the gap that Catullus outlines:

'This business of kissing'

This is a serious business, this new method
 you are trialling to protect my reputation –
 don't let me, with my flighty ways,
 make you break off from your kissations!
 I'm not sure you've quite reached a total yet
 uncountable enough to put us
 out of reach of gossip,
 though enough that it would be embarrassing
 if the number *did* get out.
 Don't even think about that business
 in Bithynia, there's work
 to be done right here in our kissiary . . .
 only, *how* many will it be till you're done?

In *I, Clodia* I follow this poem with 'Pipiabat', the poem I imagine as the prompt to the second of Catullus' sparrow poems, poem 3. To set up the Catullus elegy is to make more of an interpretation, particularly of tone. Oddly, the sparrow poems have been something

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of a focus for feminist re-readings of the Catullus poems. In Helen Dunmore's novelization of Catullus story, *Counting the Stars* (2008), the sparrow poems are taken seriously as evidence of Clodia's devotion to her bird. Not that this could be called a feminist version of the story (Clodia is as misogynistic as Cicero's portrayal of Clodia in the *Pro Caelio*). In Dunmore's story, Catullus finally breaks up with Clodia when she beats up her maidservant because of the death of the bird. In contrast, Dorothy Parker's much earlier 'From a Letter From Lesbia' (1936) offers a witty dismissal of the Catullus poems:

That thing he wrote, the time the sparrow died –
(Oh, most unpleasant – gloomy, tedious words!)
I called it sweet, and made believe I cried;
The stupid fool! I've always hated birds. . . .

Yet surely the elegiac excess of Catullus' poem was not accidental, but a witty response to a game he was playing with a sparring partner. To me, the elegiac excess reads as a pretence at taking seriously what the comedy of the pretence acknowledges *as* pretence. My aim in *I, Clodia* was to write a poem that would make sense of Catullus' elegy for the sparrow as one move in a game played between two equal partners:

'Pipiabat'

[used to chirp . . .]

Look at me, my tear-stained face,
my red eyes – is this what you came for?
It's not what you think.
So there are verses about me
circulating about the city – how could you
possibly imagine I, Clodia, would care?
I might cry over *your* verses –
tears of *laughter* –
but these are real tears,
I'm grieving.
Look at what was my little bird,
yesterday – this was
somebody, closer to me than . . .
you had better be leaving.

These poems are acts of interpretation. Yet imagined only as responses to the Catullus poems, they do not have to make the claims a novelization like Dunmore's must make about the emotional lives of Clodia and Catullus. Written in the third person, *Counting the Stars* defines the relationship in terms of the emotions that are imagined to give rise to the poetry: 'He feels such tenderness for her. Such a desire to cherish her, as if she were his own child. He's never felt like this about any woman before' (2008: 43). The Clodia

poems, in comparison, might suggest an interpretation of the tone of Catullus' poems, but only on the level of the exchange of poetry itself – and we already have half of the exchange. The emotional truths behind the Clodia poems can only be inferred or imagined from the literary performance.

Yet in constructing responses that act as moves in a game, I am already beginning to develop a story that goes beyond the narrative hints of the Catullus poems. Maxine Lewis describes the 'peculiar and particular combination of narrative possibilities and impossibilities contained in Catullus' work', arguing that the very nature of the collection with its autobiographical and biographical references, its continuities of cast, its repetitions and developments as well as its inconsistencies, gaps and contradictory order make it 'very difficult for us to stop looking for a narrative of Catullus' (2013: 2). Giving a voice to Clodia that would supply the prompts and responses to Catullus' poems necessarily involved an interpretation of the poetry that would include making sense of the biographical references, and would include an interpretation of the role of each individual poem in relation to a developing affair.

Having initially thought I could write individual responses to individual poems, keeping the original order with the reader invited to make their own narrative sense of the Clodia poems, I found I needed to determine a chronology to situate Catullus' poems, and Clodia's responses. Lewis describes the process of narrativization in response to Catullus' collection as an act of 'recuperation' that depends on the retrieval of narrative elements from the original text. Because of the references to historical and biographical facts, it is also possible to 'recuperate' narrative details from outside the poetry itself: the text of the *Pro Caelio* trial in which Cicero defames Clodia to discount her testimony against Caelius, Cicero's 'Letter to Atticus, 19 April 59 BC' referring to Clodia 'leading the charge' for her brother's political ambitions not long after the death of her husband, the dates of her husband's absence from Rome, the date of his death, the date of Catullus' departure from Rome for Bithynia, and accounts of the politics surrounding the affairs of Clodius and Caelius. These were the fixed points that could not be altered in the interstices of which the narrativization of the affair between Clodia and Catullus had to take place.

The ambiguities of the order of the poems not only allowed but necessitated an element of invention in constructing the narrative of an affair.³ Once it became clear I was telling a story, I allowed the imperatives of narrative to determine some of the interpretative decisions I needed to make. I adapted the Hollywood three-act structure for the sequence: the first act establishing what the protagonist wants; the mid-point sending the story in a new direction; and the third act providing resolution. In the first half of the sequence, what Clodia has *wanted* – or, at least, what she has aimed for – has been to resist the advances of Catullus. This ends, according to my story, with the death of Catullus' brother. To account for the extreme bitterness of the poems from the end of the affair, I imagine a scenario in which Clodia sends one of her sharpest poems of rejection to Catullus having not yet received the news he sent her of his brother's death. Taking her poem as her cold-hearted reply, he leaves Rome at last, sending back from his travels the elegy to his brother from Troy and the long poems, thought by many scholars

to be his masterpieces. This disastrous misunderstanding gives my story its mid-point change of direction. Nothing after this can be the same.

This scenario also solves two narrative problems. Firstly, it makes Clodia's actions the cause of Catullus' departure, and so makes her the agent of her own story. Secondly, it solves an interpretive problem, given that there have been two different causes commonly proposed for Catullus' journey to Bithynia in the spring of 57 BC. The conflicting interpretations offered are partly due to the uncertainty of two key narrative facts: the date of his brother's death and the dates of the affair with Clodia. The departure for Bithynia may have nothing to do with either of those two events in Catullus' story. Yet since the elegy for his brother was composed (or at least presents itself as if it were composed) where his brother was buried, in Troy, not so far from Bithynia, it is often supposed his brother's death is the *reason* he leaves Rome.⁴ Other narratives offer his final break with Clodia as the reason he leaves and takes up what proved to be a profoundly resented position as a member of the cohort of Memmius.⁵ To combine the two interpretations, and take both as contributing causes, weakens the narrative impact of both. It is less dramatic a renunciation of an affair to flounce off . . . to bury a brother; and it certainly diminishes the poignancy of the grieving brother travelling to Troy if he is depicted sending curses to Clodia along the way. If the two causes are *not* set alongside each another – 'this reason,' but also 'this reason' – but connected in terms of the plot, then the impact of one can be added *to* the other, rather than subtracted *from* it. For Clodia to break off with Catullus is par for the course; but for Catullus to receive a poem like 'No Rough Verses,' apparently in reply to his plea for her to set aside her defences and console him in his grief, is another matter altogether. Even though 'No Rough Verses' is constructed around an act of *non*-reading, it is still written as a response to Catullus' poetry. It picks up on Catullus' strategy of figuring himself as a suffering heroine, by borrowing its argument from Jason's response to Medea's long speech of reproach in Euripides' play (*ll.*522–45), also present in poem 68b:

'No rough verses'

No rough verses, but like a surf-tossed sailor
wielding wisely his gaff-rigged fore-and-aft sail,
so shall I keep your favourite of Greek metres
to steer my way free of your storm of curses.
What I owe you – these claims you make are madness –
but to counter them one by one in order:
first, consider, what we owe Aphrodite –
your voyage here, as plunder of my husband,
your change of plans, your brother left unaided,
none of this can be laid as charges on me,
all was fated, and I merely received you.
Oh, I loved you, and being loved by me did
you not take more than you could ever give me?

Your 'exile' here – to live in Rome is *living*,
 I don't see you, in thrall to me no longer,
 rushing back to your farmhouse in Verona, or
 setting sail to do business in Bithynia.
 Had you stayed put, a poet of the provinces,
 not one person would know your name – or care to.

The third turning point in the sequence comes when Clodia decides to take action to restore what she can of the relationship she had with Catullus. According to my chronology, this is after two years of separation; after Caelius' betrayal and the trial in which Cicero painted Clodia herself as a Medea, and after Catullus has been writing his long, narrative poems, which I imagine Clodia reading as they circulate among the literary set in Rome. The poem Clodia writes now is the imagined prompt for Catullus' poem 36, which presents itself as a response to a vow made by Clodia to Venus that she would burn all the best poems of the worst poet if she could have Catullus restored to her (and if he would stop unleashing his harsh iambics at her). Catullus in response declares the vow to be discharged by his burning the poems of Volusius. The point of Catullus' poem is easily enough grasped – he is not going to accept himself as the definition of the worst poet, any more than he would proclaim Cicero the best lawyer. But why, according to his poem, does Clodia promise to burn the *best* verses of the worst poet? This must mean something. We must be overhearing some private joke. This is the joke around which the Clodia poem 'Some poet from the provinces' is constructed.

'Some poet from the provinces'

Only so recently Rome was still a city worth living in –
 those old days Cicero misses when serious
 poets wrote of big subjects and the rest of us
 were supposed to listen and learn were
 well behind us, and we, flighty, read only
 what had been written last night, quickly, before
 it was out of date by the afternoon, and flung
 our responses into hendecasyllables
 to poems we anticipated before
 they could even be written. But now,
 some poet from the provinces
 has sent back *epic verses*, pushing aside
 modern characters (like, oh, me for instance) to give
 the starring parts to those boring old Greek heroes
 stuck in stucco on our walls!
 And everyone seems to be reading them!
 No use writing to Catullus any more.
 Oh, Venus, you who were once so close to us,

might you not be listening now?
What I wouldn't give if you would restore
Catullus back to me, Catullus as he used to be
(perhaps without quite the propensity
to send such harsh iambs – or, not against me) . . .
I hereby vow that if you will bring my Catullus
back to me, I will cheerfully burn
all the most celebrated verses
of that very worst of provincial poets!

If these poems are designed for me to be able to map my sequence onto the Hollywood three-act structure, it would make little sense for me to claim to be writing outside time and outside culture. My Clodia might be constructed as the implied reader of Catullus' poems, but this is obviously an *imaginary* implied reader. Indeed, the relationship between implied reader and author is exactly the sort of romance that might be invented by a New Zealander whose reading includes a post-classical heritage of romances between well-matched intellectuals, from Shakespeare's Beatrice and Benedict, to Jane Austen's Darcy and Elizabeth, and on to Charlotte Brontë's Jane and Rochester, not to mention thirty-five Georgette Heyer romances. Writing as Clodia inevitably means writing through the looking glass, reflecting my own 'haze of assumptions' (Woolf 1925; 2008: 14). In this case, the imaginary implied reader of Catullus, the imaginary author of the Clodia poems, is doubly refracted through the work of an imaginary translator. Since Clodia would have been writing in Latin, just as Catullus was, the poetry I am writing has to be read as an imaginary translation from original texts that we can imagine are more literary, more witty and more successful than my own. We can imagine too that they would all have been written in metre, rather than the free verse I use for most of the imaginary translations.

I would like to suggest, though, that the 'haze of assumptions' we bring to classical texts is not the only interesting aspect of our reading of them. The reading of Catullus that is dramatized in *I, Clodia* perhaps reflects the ordinary practice of reading classical texts just as well as, or better than, the radical re-readings I tried out in *Catullus for Children* (2004), or even the illuminating re-readings by poets like C. K. Stead, Tiffany Atkinson or James Methven.

Charles Martindale makes a clear case for a focus on the assumptions we bring to classical literature when he observes that 'since Virgil, no reading of Homer . . . has been, or could be, wholly free of a . . . Virgilian presence' (1993: 8). This is the, by now, commonplace argument that J. M. Coetzee makes in an essay on the concept of the Classic. Coetzee argues that the Classic holds its value because of the status that continues to be accorded it, and this becomes part of its meaning, the rich heritage of interpretation, reinterpretation and cultural appropriation. Because 'the high culture of the metropolis may arrive in the form of powerful experiences which cannot . . . be embedded in their lives in any obvious way', Coetzee suggests, Classics might seem 'to have their existence in some transcendent realm' (2001: 6–7). This, he insists, is an illusion. Yet at the heart of

Coetzee's essay is an anecdote about the arrival in his own life of a powerful experience of culture felt as transcendent: hearing Bach, as a boy, with no knowledge of classical music, and feeling 'I was being spoken to by the music as music had never spoken to me before' (2001: 8). While Coetzee is quick to move on from this moment in which he describes himself as 'frozen' and spends the rest of the essay re-historicizing the concept of the Classic, nothing of what he writes about the shifting historical meanings of Bach's music in the rest of the essay really addresses the experience of listening to Bach without any of the cultural heritage he goes on to claim as the essential meaning of Bach. He concludes the essay with a return to the question of whether 'being spoken to across the ages [is] a notion that we can entertain today only in bad faith', and his own aspiration, as he puts it, 'to give the answer No' (2001: 13).

Far more obviously than music, literature engages with ideas that are inevitably cultural, historical, political, ideological. To claim any kind of 'transcendent' or 'universal' experience of literature might seem to imply the universalizing of historical values, as if to claim that a classical standard of beauty or literary value is the correct standard against which all literature can be measured, or that classical humanist values such as stoicism or fidelity should be held as universal values transcending politics and history. But there is another way of arguing for the possibility of such a transcendent experience of art as Coetzee describes, if we turn to Kant's concept of beauty as experienced both subjectively – as a felt experience – and disinterestedly, in that what is beautiful in a work of art is that which is not judged according to any political, moral or other purpose it may also perform. Considering his initial, uninformed response to the music of Bach, Coetzee wrote:

In Bach, nothing is obscure, no single step is so miraculous as to surpass imitation. Yet when the chain of sounds is realized in time, the building process ceases at a certain moment to be the mere linking of units; the units cohere as a higher-order object . . . the incarnation of ideas of exposition, complication and resolution that are more general than music. Bach thinks in music. Music thinks itself in Bach.

2001: 9

Literature involves the arrangement of concepts rather than notes, but if literature also 'thinks itself' through the individual artwork, there is a universality of access offered independent of any universal agreement about the values, or concepts, involved. You do not have to have any particular commitment to the note C sharp to appreciate its place in a Bach sonata. This does not mean the concepts, the values, are irrelevant to the meaning of a literary work, or that the meaning of a work of literature is purely formal, or to argue against the fact that our understanding of the concepts and values is necessarily limited and refracted through our own concepts and values. But I do not want to dismiss the idea that powerful cultural experiences have a reality beyond an imposed cultural response to a socially and politically validated tradition.

If, in responding to literature of the past, we are taking part in a tradition, this is a tradition made up of encounters between readers and writers in a present tense that literature allows to exist both beyond and within historical time. Butler's *The Matter of*

the Page turns back, four decades after Roland Barthes announced the death of the author, to the ‘scenes of material struggle’ (2011: 4) so often inscribed in classical literature. These are the descriptions of the moments of writing that so insist on the present moment in which the author wrote, even as they make so poignant the sense of distance between that moment and the moment of reading (now so many centuries later). In a chapter on the Orpheus story, ‘The Backward Glance’, Butler looks at all the ways in which the elusive moment of Orpheus’ glance backwards to Eurydice offers metaphors both for reading and for writing. In contrast to my own insistence on writing as a form of reading, Butler argues that ‘poets who imitate . . . are reading as writers, who always look back’ (2011: 24). But, he explains, this is a looking back that takes place again and again: as the occasion for writing back to an earlier writer; as the writer looks back on their own writing to revise what they have just written, and again, when the writing is finished and the words that were what the writer worked with ‘belong to the page now, and thence to its readers, and thus not to poesis, making, but to poetry as the afterlife of that making’ (2011: 25). Ovid, describing Orpheus’ backward glance, uses terms that Butler shows cannot help but suggest the act of writing, as Orpheus, having ‘almost reached the margin’, is ‘anxious to see’ what Butler glosses as ‘the verse he has made, step by step, metrical foot by metrical foot’ (2011: 23). What he longs to see is ‘what he has taken out of himself’, his own reflection, in a sense, but a reflection that is, as all reflections, profoundly alienating. Where Virgil describes Orpheus reaching to grasp Eurydice, Ovid, Butler observes, seems to transfer the grasping to Eurydice herself, ‘struggling to be grasped and to grasp’. And from Eurydice’s point of view, it is the poet who vanishes ‘like smoke dissolved in insubstantial air’ (2011: 27).

I concluded an essay I wrote on *Catullus for Children* with a child’s own elegy for a sparrow as my substitution for a more sustained or more academic meditation on mortality, and with the stated disavowal of any belief that a translation, appropriation, or radically new version could ever really domesticate, conquer, or, we might say, ‘grasp’ the meaning, the authority, of the Catullus texts. Writing *I, Clodia* was a way of ‘chasing Catullus’, as Balmer (2004) puts it, in the place of his Lesbia; even if my Clodia could only be a reflection of myself, reading. From the start of the project, I was driven by Ovid’s anxiety to see what I had written, to be able to grasp, if not Catullus, then my own Clodia. At the same time, from the beginning I faced the loss, with every word I wrote, of the poetry as poesis, and the loss of the place I was taking for myself as Clodia, as the reader I imagined Catullus imagining for his work. I wrote the last poem in the sequence, Clodia’s elegy for Catullus, fairly early on in the project, so for much of the time of writing I was writing steadily towards this ending.

‘[unheard]’

Are you here still, your mourners long departed?
Can you hear me, if I call in your Greek metre,
can you see me, my hair whipping my cheekbones,
my eyes stinging, the fog lifting and falling?

Time for the sky to fold itself into the lake –
I like a foggy whip. Haunt me, I command you,
don't you ever even think of letting go.
Sky-soft, wind-sore, this day is nearly over.
Who am I, Clodia, but a ghost once loved by a poet?

PART IV

FICTIONALIZING ANTIPODEAN ANTIQUITIES

CHAPTER 9

PARILIA POSCOR – DAVID MALOUF REMEMBERS THE PARILIA (*FASTI* 4.721FF.)

Nicolas Liney

We feel in one world, we think, we give names to things in another; between the two we can establish a certain correspondence, but not bridge the gap.

Proust, *The Guermentes Way*, 1920: 49

There is a brief flash of analepsis in David Malouf's narrative of Ovid's exile in Tomis, *An Imaginary Life* (1978). The banished poet, now old, recalls an occasion in his youth when he observed the Parilia, the pastoral festival of Rome celebrated annually on the 21 April in honour of Pales, the tutelary divinity of shepherds and, coincidentally, the celebration of Rome's foundation by Romulus:

I think also, in these quiet hours, of my brother's death during the Parilia, just after our birthdays, which fall on the same day.

Malouf 1978: 81

This segment was significant to Malouf, who deemed it worthy enough to note in his working journal on Tuesday, 10 November 1976: 'Today wrote the Parilia passage and the brother's death, about 1500 words. Also read the *Fasti* in Frazer's translation for this and some other things.' Having begun the novel only a week before, and with the episode falling midway through the narrative, the scene assumed central importance. Malouf's engagement with the early twentieth-century Scottish anthropologist-cum-Classicalist, J. G. Frazer, is also notable. The author of *The Golden Bough* (1890) had produced a multi-volume translation and commentary of the *Fasti* in 1929, and no serious effort would replace it until that of B. R. Nagle in 1995. Frazer's *Fasti* was lauded by Cyril Bailey as 'the most important full edition of a Latin classic published in England since the war' (1930: 236); the work showcased Frazer's continued exploration of the comparative anthropology of classical cultures and myths, and also the preoccupations of British classical scholarship of the time, particularly the persisting question of how to reconcile Victorian Britain's imperial legacy, its underpinning by the Classical Tradition, and the cultural prevalence of an exotic 'other' (see Bradley 2010). We shall return to Frazer later, but it is important to note, from the outset, his importance within Malouf's referential framework for the Parilia, and for Ovid himself.

An Imaginary Life, described by Malouf as 'a fiction with its roots in possible event', demands complete flexibility with Ovid's biography (Malouf 1978: 153). An epistolary

novel that records Ovid's experiences with the Getae tribe in Tomis and his grappling with the inefficacy of the Latin language, the turning point comes when the tribesmen kidnap a feral boy ('the Child') from the surrounding environs. Ovid takes it upon himself to educate the Child, leading to a questioning of the role of pedagogy and language, and to Ovid's profound awareness of the sublimity of the natural world that the Child represents. The novel sits at the crossroads between Romanticism and post-colonialism, either praised for its transcendence of traditional colonial discourse (Ashcroft 2001; Byron 2005; Ramsey-Kurtz 2007; 2012) or condemned as a gross oversight of Australia's conflicted history, portraying instead a sepia-tinted image of a Rousseauian natural world (Grasa and Pilar 2012; Archer-Lean 2014).

Malouf is not alone in this fictional recasting of the exile of Ovid, joining others such as Vintila Horia (*God Was Born in Exile* 1960), Christoph Ransmayr (*The Last World* 1988), and Antonio Tabucchi ('Dream of Publius Ovidius Naso, Poet and Courtier' 1992). These writers have taken Ovid's exilic corpus to raise questions of national identity and cultural liminality, Antipodean anxieties and alterity, and the experience of colonialism *qua* exile and displacement, particularly for the colonizer. Scholarship has brought these issues to light in *An Imaginary Life*, particularly in Australia (see, *inter alia*, Bishop 1982; Pierce 1982; Jolly 1986; Ashcroft 2001; Kennedy 2002; Randall 2006), and indeed, *An Imaginary Life* typifies a strain of what Irina Grigorescu Pana (1993) has diagnosed as the 'Tomis complex'. As the term suggests, the *Ovidius Australiensis* could discover value in a new world, critique and replace his original centre, express a '*sentimiento* of exile' (Pana 1993: 532), even attempt a new cultural identity, but the alienation and yearning for a return to the 'centre' remain. The novel has come to assume an important role in post-colonial scholarship, not only on contemporary Australian literature, but also on the Reception and meaning of the classics therein.

The account of the Parilia in *An Imaginary Life* allows us to step back and gauge Malouf's interaction with Ovid's texts on an intimate level. The novel takes its subject matter from Ovid's works produced in exile – the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*. Yet other elements of Ovid's *oeuvre* are present. Ioannis Ziogas (2011) and Nicholas Jose (2014) have examined the importance of the *Metamorphoses* in the novel, and this chapter turns to the *Fasti*, and its importance for our understanding of Ovid's emergent identity in his new world.

The Parilia is central to Malouf's characterization of Ovid: the poet acts both as Romulus, the city founder and brother slayer, and Remus, the ostracized and sacrificed. The ritual ultimately symbolizes an act of foundation, suggestive of both repetition and difference, model and copy, past and present, by which the poet can define his new role, and negotiate his relationship between Rome and Tomis. Underlying this dialogue is the anthropological underpinnings of Frazer's commentaries, which ultimately sought to place Roman religion in a wider cultural network. Indeed, we should not take Malouf's engagement with Frazer as merely referential, but as an engagement with a crucial element of the larger trajectory of Ovidian reception; elements of Malouf's Ovidian world are inextricable from the Frazerian, anthropological underpinnings of Ovidian scholarship.

Exiles and aetiologies: The Parilia in Augustan poetry

To understand Malouf's interest in the Parilia, it is necessary to locate its treatment in Ovid's *Fasti*, and within its Augustan context. It has been argued that the *Fasti* was partly composed or edited in Tomis, as circumstantial evidence, and some phrases in the *Fasti* common with the exilic corpus, point towards (Hinds 1987; Bömer 1988: 215–33; Boyle 1997; Fantham 1998: 3). The poetics of the *Fasti* betray nostalgia for a Rome that cannot be recovered; Gian Biagio Conte labels it an 'aetiological elegy' (1994: 356), a work punctuated with first person anecdote and affectations that allow Ovid to relive, and evocatively take part in, the religious calendar of his *patria*:

Certe ego de vitulo cinerem stipulasque fabalis
 saepe tuli plena, februa casta, manu:
 Certe ego transilui positas ter in ordine flammās.
 udaeque roratas laurea misit aquas.

Sure it is that I have often brought with full hands the ashes of the calf and the beanstraws, chaste means of expiation. Sure it is that I have leaped over the flames ranged three in a row, and the moist laurel-bough has sprinkled water on me.

4.725–8 trans. Frazer

We are given a personal explanation, one that asks us to accept its authenticity, and acknowledge Ovid as a participant in Rome's civic rituals and festivals, removed though he is from their religious centre.

The Parilia was perhaps the most opportune occasion for Ovid to stress his personal investment in the city's calendar: the literary tradition from Ennius onwards had connected this feast day of Pales with the foundation of Rome (Varro, *De Lingua Latina* 6.15; Cicero, *On Divination* 2.47; Pliny, *Natural History*, 38.66). The festival heralded the city's *dies natalis*, the conventional day upon which Romulus had laid the foundation of his walls, but also connected the Roman state with its pastoral, pre-urban history. Its rites involved an act of purification by fire and smoke, followed by a form of *asperges*, and then the leaping, three times, over bonfires of hay and straw. These are the elements that Malouf's exiled Ovid also remembers so vividly in his *moments bienheureux*.

The Parilia's foundational appeal was something that Augustan poets, so fond of Rome's preterite topography ('*nunc-tunc*') and ktistic accounts of all varieties, especially played upon. More poignantly, the Parilia, as foundation myth, provided occasion for self-identification, in terms of inclusion within and exclusion from the *patria*.¹ Exile, it seemed, went together with aetiology. Propertius, for example, uses the Parilia as backdrop for an infamous act of civic sedition: the betrayal of Tarpeia in elegy 4.4. Tarpeia's treachery, and the subsequent Sabine incursion, was facilitated by the fact that the Romans were blissfully celebrating the Parilia at the time (4.4.73–8), an ironic happenstance, in that the celebration of the city's foundation almost resulted in its destruction. More importantly, the poem is focalized through the outsider – Tarpeia is

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an exile, a voluntary defector from Rome, the shamed and shameful voyeur (4.4.35–6). Propertius links the rituals of the Parilia to Tarpeia's removal from her centre.

Ovid emphasizes this connection in his own account of the Parilia, which includes the story of Romulus and Remus, and the slaying of the latter. The foundational festival is thus framed by transgression, exclusion and, ultimately, by fratricide. Here is Ovid's prescription for the festival's rituals, with Frazer's translation:

i, pete virginea, populus, suffimen ab ara:
Vesta dabit, Vestae munere purus eris.
Sanguis equi suffimen erit vitulique favilla,
Tertia res durae culmen inane fabae.
Pastor, oves saturas ad prima crepuscula lustra:
Unda prius spargat, virgaue verrat humum,
Frondebis et fixis decorentur ovilia fumi,
Et tegat ornatas longa corona fores.

Ye people, go fetch materials for fumigation from the Virgin's altar. Vesta will give them. By Vesta's gift ye shall be pure. The materials for fumigation will be the blood of a horse and the ashes of a calf. The third thing will be the empty stalks of hard beans. Shepherd, do thou purify thy well-fed sheep at fall of twilight. First sprinkle the ground with water and sweep it with a broom. Deck the sheepfold with leaves and branches fastened to it; adorn the door and cover it with a long festoon.

4.731–46, trans. Frazer

This meticulous attention to the *minutiae* of the ritual provides the bulk of Malouf's own description in *An Imaginary Life*, strengthened further by Frazer's own translation and commentary. However, of equal importance is the aetiology Ovid goes on to give for the ritual of the fire-leaping, which symbolizes Remus' leaping over the walls of Romulus:

Hoc Celer urget opus, quem Romulus ipse vocaret,
'sint,' que 'Celer, curae' dixerat 'ista tuae,
neve quis aut muros aut factam vomere fossam
transeat: audentem talia dede neci.'
Quod Remus ignorans humiles contemnere muros
coepit et 'his populus' dicere 'tutus erit?'
Nec mora, transiluit. rutro Celer occupant ausum;
ille permit duram sanguinolentus humum

The work was urged on by Celer, whom Romulus himself had named and said, 'Celer, be this thy care; let not man cross the walls nor the trench which the share hath made: who dares to do so, put him to death.' Ignorant of this, Remus began to mock the lowly walls and say, 'Shall these protect the people?' and straightaway he

leaped across them. Instantly Celer struck the rash man with a shovel. Covered with blood, Remus sank on the stony ground.

4.837–44, trans. Frazer

Ovid rehashes the well-known tale of Romulus building his fledgling walls, a cheeky Remus transgressing the new city's boundaries, and an overzealous Celer, Romulus' strongman, striking the perpetrator dead. The celebration of the Parilia, and the foundation of Rome, gives way to the funeral of Remus, with Romulus, distraught but resolute (4.847), giving a *laudatio funebris* that holds not a small echo of Catullan epitaph: *invito frater adempte, vale!* (101.10) at 4.852. As with Propertius' Tarpeia – and in similar terms of the tension between belonging and exile, inclusion and exclusion – Ovid characterizes the Romulus and Remus of the Parilia. His foundational hero is placed against transgressive citizen, who threatens to subvert personal and civic boundaries, and is cast out of the community.

The *Fasti*'s account of the Parilia proves instrumental for Malouf's characterization of Ovid. For Malouf, doubling and interchange mark the poet, who plays the role of citizen and exile, not only assuming the role of Romulus the city founder, but also acting as substitute for his own dead brother. Indeed, it is this fraternal element of Ovid's mythopoesis of the Parilia that lends itself most readily to Malouf's novel. In the narrative, Ovid will lose his elder brother, obliquely framed as Ovid's twin – 'our birthdays fall on the same day' (1978: 81) – and face his conflicted relationship with his father, during the celebration of the Parilia. Yet he will also assume his brother's role as both their father's heir and as performer of the Parilia, shouldering the unexpected responsibilities of his brother's religious duties. Later, as an exile in Tomis, he evokes this memory of the Parilia to reflect upon the personal and civic importance the festival holds for him, and how it might be re-presented in his new space. The Parilia provides an interface through which Ovid can find closure on his former identity and acceptance of the new.

Malouf's reading of the Parilia reflects the poetic agenda of the *Fasti* more broadly, and its thematic preoccupation with foundation and attachment to place. Ostensibly, Ovid's Parilia is about Rome, and affirms the Augustan agenda to represent the present city as a logical progression of its past, through antiquarianism, genealogy and generational continuity (see Pasco-Pranger 2006: 115). However, on the other hand, the *Fasti*'s account also hints at the precarious contingency of Rome's foundation and continued existence, and the required resolution of conflict through the homogenization, or silencing, of its integral parts. Ovidian counter-imperial poetics provide an alternative to the Virgilian programme of empire-building; Augustan literature could instead be exposed to 'the belief in a constantly shifting world no longer governed by ... oppressive master narratives' (Ziolkowski 2005: 168).

Indeed, the notion that rituals initially unique to a specific geo-cultural plane such as Rome might not be entirely autonomous, but might instead hold comparative similarities to other cultural practices, had found an earlier voice in the author of *The Golden Bough*, and Ovid translator, J. G. Frazer. A product of an imperial culture himself, Frazer's anthropological work, and commentary on the *Fasti*, opened Ovid's Rome to this fragmentation and replication within the wider world: one empire replaced another, and one narrative subsumed the other.

The repetition of ritual: Frazer and the *Fasti*

Following on from the success of *The Golden Bough*, and having completed commentaries on Pausanias (1898) and Apollodorus (1921), Frazer turned his attention to a translation and commentary of Ovid's *Fasti* in the 1920s. It was to be a characteristically vast project. His publisher George Macmillan had in fact attempted to curb Frazer's ambitions, writing to the scholar in 1926: 'It looks like the commentary . . . ought to come to a single volume of reasonable size' (Frazer MS 11, in Gee 1998: 74). His advice was evidently declined: profoundly prolix, by 1929, the edition had ballooned to a monumental five volumes. It was, for the most part, well received: 'We recognise again Sir James Frazer's unique gift of felicitous quotation and literary reminiscence, his mastery of the art of narrative whereby he calls into speaking life the legend and history of Rome', confirmed Glaswegian Professor William Rennie (Frazer MS 11, in Gee 1998: 74). This 'art of narrative' – Frazer's embellished prose-style translation – would in turn influence Malouf's description of the Parilia. Yet it also served to widen the scope of Ovid's *Fasti* to fit another all-encompassing, totalizing epic – a reiteration of Rome as the *urbs orbis* ('city of the world'), clothed in the vestment of Britain's ever-expansive realm.

The Parilia was of considerable importance to Frazer. He had already made extensive use of the festival in *The Golden Bough*, in the chapter entitled 'St. George and the Parilia' that aimed to show a connection between the pastoral celebration and kingship. Frazer sets out to prove that these rites were not specific to Rome, but bore parallels with numerous European cultural rites connected with St George, patron saint of flock and herd. For Frazer, it was no coincidence that rites similar to Ovid's Parilia were observed in a multiplicity of communities in Eastern Europe and the Celtic Beltane, 'only two days after the Parilia, with which they may well be connected by descent from a common festival observed by pastoral Aryan peoples in spring' (Frazer 1929: 339). The Parilia was not definitive of Rome's foundation, and represented just one model analogous to the religious practices of numerous other cultures, functioning within the much larger cultural matrix of Frazer's St George's Day, which fortuitously found its 'most perfectly preserved specimen' in the highlands of Frazer's own Scotland (Frazer 1929: 339).

Although *prima facie* a commentary that engaged in rigorous textual and philological scholarship, the subject matter of the *Fasti* – the religious calendar of Rome – provided Frazer an opportunity to expand comparative enquiries, grounded within a classical text, playing the role of Victorian Anthropologist, with material drawn from the British empire, reaching as far as Australia. This affects our reading of Ovid, and the interrelation between the *Fasti* and *The Golden Bough* transforms Ovid from authorial poetic voice to object of investigation. Ovid becomes a footnote, a variable within a larger set of data, the subject recast as object.

Importantly, Australia and Australian anthropology played a specific role within Frazer's scope of reference, particularly from 1897 onwards, when Frazer was introduced to the works of Lorimer Fison, Baldwin Spencer, F. J. Gillen and Alfred William Howitt (Ackerman 1987: 143–63). The research and recordings of these scholars led to substantial revisions of *The Golden Bough*, and their descriptions of Australia also had a powerful

effect on Frazer's literary imagination. In response to Spencer's *Wanderings in Wild Australia* (1928), he envisaged a palpable link between the country's 'primitive' landscape and classical epic, through evocative literary anthropology, or what he termed 'anthropological epic':

Wanderings in Wild Australia may be compared to the *Odyssey* . . . if (Spencer) did not encounter foes like the Cyclopes or Scylla and Charybdis, at least he held with his own eyes the rocky pool in which the dreadful dragon, the Wollunqua, was believed to lurk, ready to dart out and devour its human victims. All this serves to invest the story of Spencer's wanderings in Australia with an atmosphere of romance, and to lend it the character of an anthropological epic.

Frazer in Crawford 1990: 30–1

Classical literary form was thus for Frazer a means of familiarizing an Antipodean 'other', and this in turn provided new means of interpreting the classical world. The idealized memory of the classical world was applied to the recording of ethnographic observation, but Frazer reciprocally saw comparative anthropology as a means of circumnavigating the restrictions set in place by the relative dearth of classical evidence:

... a commentator on a Classical author is often confronted by problems which cannot be solved by the evidence of Classical antiquity alone, and he is compelled to seek more or less probable solutions in the survey of a wider field by comparing the beliefs, customs, and institutions of the Classical peoples with those of peoples in other ages and in other parts of the world.

Frazer MS 11, in Gee 1998: 78

A similar tension and contradiction arises in *An Imaginary Life*, which serves to strengthen, through ritual, a connection between new Tomis and old Rome. Memory of the old world allows Ovid to find meaning in the new, which in turn erodes and replaces his reliance on Rome. Ritual, and the memory of ritual, is key to understanding the construction of Ovid's emergent identity, and further reinforces the notion of Ovid's desire for the re-foundation of his civic identity. Frazer's insistence on the repetition of ritual elements within numerous cultures shapes how we read Ovid's engagement with his new world. With this in mind, we turn to *An Imaginary Life*, and the Parilia.

The Parilia in Tomis

Ovid's recollection of the Parilia comes at a point of introspection and crisis for the poet: he has just assumed tutelage of the Child whom the Getae have kidnapped. Ovid is wracked with guilt at the Child's abduction, but also finds in the Child a vestigial emblem of his own formative years: 'he is the wild boy of my childhood. I know that now. Who has come back to me' (Malouf 1978: 48).

This incites in Ovid a grappling with memories of his *patria*, which mirrors the search for foundation and belonging that he is currently undergoing in Tomis, a parallel that Ovid further finds a metonym for in the activities of his young ward: 'In the first precarious placing of one block upon another to make a little tower, the beginnings of a city' (Malouf 1978: 76). Recalling his own childhood, Ovid's memory of the Parilia echoes these concerns of inclusion in and exclusion from the city-state and from the realm of the *paterfamilias*. The idea of a boundary, tangible and immanent, emerges; one that has already been transgressed in the poet's mind:

I too know all the boundary stones of our land, but to me they mean something different. They are where the world begins. Beyond them lies Rome and all the known world that we Romans have power over. Out there, beyond the boundary stones, the mystery begins.

Malouf 1976: 82

Malouf's inclusion of the Parilia was not coincidental, but consciously emphasizes the central themes of the book. The Parilia, as the principal foundational festival of Rome, represents the effective *mise en abyme* of the narrative: the exiled poet enacts his own imaginative *nostos* (his *Odyssey*, his *Aeneid*) and reproduces, through personal memory, the margin as centre, effectively reimagining and refounding his *patria* in Tomis.

The foundational element of the Parilia also heightens the importance of the episode to the formation of Ovid's character, particularly in its implicit allusion to Romulus and Remus, as portrayed in the *Fasti*. Ovid the exile emerges as Ovid the ktistic hero, a new Romulus, and it becomes clear that we are dealing as much with a foundational story as with a story of exile, an aspect of the novel that Malouf has acknowledged; that of 'being at the edge of exile, an aspect of the unknown world and having to discover how you make that the centre' (Willbanks 1990: 14).

Ovid's memory of the Parilia, focalized through the recollection of his father and brother, is superimposed upon Tomis, which imbues the memory with significance, toppling Rome's supremacy. Ovid's early assertion that 'I am Roman and a poet' (Malouf 1978: 38) is replaced with the realization that 'I have found my way back to that country I will never see again and am at home . . . I know where I was born' (84). As Ovid reshapes himself through ritual, the unknown is made known, and cultural practices and identities, on face value mutually exclusive, gradually become interchangeable and intrinsically related. Ovid's ruminations on the Parilia and other rituals thus echo their Frazerian reading, which in turn draws a connection between *An Imaginary Life* and the *Fasti*, and helps to underscore a larger preoccupation of the novel.

Ovid's recollection of the Parilia reads as an amalgamation of the two separate strands of the *Fasti*'s account: the description of the rites, in which the poet has participated first-hand, and the aetiological account of Romulus and Remus. The account in *An Imaginary Life* has Ovid replace his mortally ill brother as the festival's traditional celebrant. Ovid feels guilt at usurping his brother's role, and thereby (thinks Ovid) killing him. Here is Ovid's account of the ritual:

I let a slave loosen my cloak. I sip from the pail of milk. Take in my hand the beanstalk and the ashes of the calf. My father dips a laurel branch in water and sprinkles me with it. He is weeping. My chest, my brow. I blink under the shower of little drops.

Malouf 1978: 83

The scene reproduces a truncated version of the ritual observations that the *Fasti* lists, casting the various observances of the Parilia's in language highly imitative of Frazer's own translation and description of the ritual's religious signifiers ('pails of warm milk, 'stalks of hard beans', 'crackling straw'). Ovid then partakes in the leaping over fires:

The heaps of straw are kindled all the way down the field for me to leap over, and as I sprint away and go flying over the first of them, feeling the rush of air into my lungs, feeling the joy of it all, the leaping, the being cleansed and gathered into the web of things.

Malouf 1978: 82

Although Ovid remembers the Parilia as an instance of cleansing renewal, it also results in the unthinkable: 'I know that it has happened – I have let some grain of belief in all this sprout in my mind, and killed him. My brother is dead ... I have run my brother's death' (Malouf 1978: 83). We recall Remus' leaping over the walls in the *Fasti*. Here, the roles are obscured and substituted, and Ovid assumes the roles of both Romulus (as founder and successor) and Remus (as transgressor and victim).

The Parilia provides the basis upon which we understand the ritualistic elements of *An Imaginary Life*, linking a thematic chain through the narrative, which allows Ovid to move between past and present, memory and future, framed in terms of belief and belonging. Through memory, time becomes repetitive, obscured and self-referential (memories contain memories), disrupting the diachronic sequence of the novel: ritual modulates between past and present, Rome and Tomis, reflecting the exile's internal trauma – his inability to renew himself, and his desire to do so. Ovid's interior narrative floats back and forth atemporally, culminating in his concluding remark, which references his introductory words: 'it is summer. It is spring. I am immeasurably, unbearably happy. I am three years old. I am sixty. I am six' (1978: 153). This inconsistency is further offset by the constant presence of Ovid's addressee, the reader, fixed in the permanent future, unobtainable by Ovid: 'I cast this letter upon the centuries ... have you heard my name? Ovid? Am I still known?' (Malouf 1978: 13).

The effect of this repetition is exemplified by an earlier moment in the novel that looks forward to the Parilia, wherein Malouf employs another anthropological image. Ovid accompanies the horseman of the Getae to visit their ancestral funerary mounds, 'a hundred of them perhaps, all made of broken stone and many of them surmounted by the skeleton of a horse and rider, impaled on a pole' (Malouf 1978: 36), an allusion to Herodotus' description of Scythian burial rites (4.72). Through several similarities, Ovid's experience at the grave mounds draws a parallel with the later Parilia, casting

forward, and paradoxically providing the model and space for his memory, binding the old world with the new. Just as at the Parilia, Ovid feels the breathless exhilaration of the affirmation belief, and the relief of renewal:

Oddly enough as I weave back and forth between the towering forms I feel a moment of exhilaration, and am reminded of something – something that my mind fails to grasp, as if this has happened before . . . I let the cold air fill my lungs, then expelling it in a long cry, and feel freed of something.

1978: 38

The impression of Ovid's emotional response also foreshadows his response to the Parilia, in which again realization is something *felt* and *believed* rather than rationally understood or arrived at, a religious experience that transcends the boundaries of language:

I feel it as a fact in my limbs, in their weariness as I come round to the start, in my own breathlessness as I lean forward, hands on hips, and gasp for air.

83

This act of belief reconciles Ovid's awareness of self with his surrounding landscape, but also rehabilitates his memory of the Parilia within his new context. This is further accentuated by the elusive sense of *déjà vu* that Ovid expresses: 'this has happened before' (38). The connection between past and present is portrayed in a tapestry of recollection, memory and dream, bound together by a sequence of rituals, both imagined and real, that culminates in the Parilia.

From the perspective of hindsight that his memories afford, Ovid can trace his displacement. This is explored by a further, ancillary memory, causally connected to Ovid's experience of the Parilia and triggered by his participation in the Getae's ritual, sustaining the thematic focus on questions of substitution, belief and identity. After the Getae celebrate the funerary rites, Ovid draws another association: 'Riding out into the sunlight I find myself thinking . . . of the brother who died when I was a young man, and whose place I took as heir' (Malouf 1978: 38). Ovid regretfully speculates on his brother's lost future: 'It is my brother who would have saved the last of our lands, won public office, done all a good son can be expected to in the way of piety towards his family gods' (Malouf 1978: 39). These counterfactuals – the disrupted expectations of heritage and lineal succession – jar against Ovid's own experience: 'I have already begun to leave . . . I am already on my way, although I cannot know it yet, to exile' (Malouf 1978: 39). Organizing his memories, Ovid, looking back at the Parilia, can give a definitive response to the trepidation he has earlier expressed, and give structure to his exilic experience:

I find myself wishing that I could talk to my father once more, after all these years of estrangement, and tell him that I have found my way back to that country I will

never see again and am at home. I have admitted at last its claims upon me. I know where I was born.

84

The ambivalence of 'home' (neither here nor there, in Ovid's mind) encourages the confluence of Tomis and Rome, but a connection that acknowledges the irreducibility of both, tied together through the ritualistic elements of each place. Moreover, the importance of 'home' as sufficient cause for identity is questioned; Ovid concludes his memory thinking of the Child: 'What is his country? What is his parentage? And if he does not know these things can he ever know who he is or what his fate is to be?' (Malouf 1978: 84). The validity of Ovid's memory of the Parilia, and its restorative effect, is thrown into relief by the ambiguities that the Child presents, and the centre-periphery dichotomy is further destabilized by a being that resists categorization.

Such a close reading of the Parilia reveals the themes that lie at the heart of *An Imaginary Life* – exile, foundation, memory and identity. Ritual is the vehicle through which these themes are explored and organized, and around which the narrative is structured. However, Malouf's engagement with the Parilia also highlights his intimate and sensitive engagement with the *Fasti* as a text, not simply as source material for the ritual practices, but as a model for their meaning and relevance to Ovid's identity and his discovery of his new world. The Parilia passage of the *Fasti*, and its aetiological mythology, is central to Ovid's characterization, and Malouf invites comparison between Romulus and Remus, and the exile Ovid.

Equally crucial, as noted, is Frazer's translation and commentary, and the nascent connection between the disciplines of Classics and Anthropology that it promulgated (see Barchiesi 2014). I have not tried to claim that Malouf was working directly from Frazer's voluminous exegesis, but that his presence in twentieth-century Ovidian scholarship and translation was paramount. Moreover, Frazer's spectre had loomed large over Australia's own incipient anthropological studies, where he was invariably hailed 'Our Master',² with scholars such as Spencer and Gillen serving as conduits, Frazer was an active force in the development of anthropology in Australia, which had political and legal consequences for colonial rule, and especially the criteria of Aboriginal land ownership and capability for 'civilisation' (see Mulvaney 1993).

And anthropology was certainly on Malouf's mind, who reflected, as late as 1989, that 'one of the attractions to me was that nothing was known about the society that Ovid went to, so I could make it all up. I could be a kind of anthropologist of something that didn't previously exist', a glib sentiment dangerously close to those expressed by the early explorers and anthropologists of another 'voiceless' *terra nullius*.

Indeed, it is hard to remove early anthropology from its imperial framework. As a discipline initially predicated on the hierarchical relationship between colonizer and colonized, Anthropology's hermeneutic validity had long since been challenged by the globally restructuring effects of the Second World War, and, most evidently visible for Malouf in the 1970s, by the ramifications of Vietnam, the collapse of the White Australia

policy and the Land Rights Act in 1976. Does Frazer's presence then imply the reiteration of an anachronistic, European mode of thinking about Classics and its cultural relevance, inseparable from a discourse on empire? Or just as Frazer provided his own reading of Ovid, does Malouf implicitly deconstruct Frazer, presenting a re-reading of a central voice of authority against which the author can assert his own understanding of Ovid, and Ovid's poetry, to Australian identity?

Frazer's *Fasti* raises questions, therefore, concerning the transmission of the Classics in Australia, and the particular post-colonial problematic of belatedness. What texts and resources are available to authors and scholars necessarily influences the conclusions they draw; access to classical texts and commentaries raises queries concerning the ideas and intellectual underpinnings they communicate. Under the post-colonial aegis, engagement with classical literature is as much an engagement with the afterlives and transmissions of texts as with the texts themselves, measured in acts of reading, counter-reading, and non-reading each work's attendant tradition. We read Malouf through a window that displays the contours of Ovidian reception, and expectantly seek the author's own effort to broaden our understanding and appreciation as readers. As Said emphasized in *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1983: 155), the epigonal, belated status of a colonial author does not render such engagement with previous ideas as 'repetition', but as an exercise in regrouping and redisposition. *An Imaginary Life* is emblematic of this tendency toward the untangling and reassemblage of the accrued values of a canonical author or text's tradition, consciously selective of those which press most pertinently upon Australia's own cultural and colonial issues. Through his exploration of ritual and memory, Malouf invites a revisitation of previous frames and focuses of Ovidian poetry, but ultimately corrals them within a fresh, vitalizing and thoroughly redefining narrative.

CHAPTER 10

IMAGINATIVE DISPLACEMENT: CLASSICAL RECEPTION IN THE YOUNG ADULT FICTION OF MARGARET MAHY

Elizabeth Hale

Margaret Mahy (1938–2012) wrote many works for young readers: young adult novels, children's stories, chapter books, educational readers, and lectures and essays on aspects of writing. She was New Zealand's most successful children's writer, at home and abroad, receiving many national and international honours. Mahy was conscious that her inclinations towards fantasy and fairy tales had been strongly influenced by the stories from overseas that made up her youthful reading. In her essay 'A Dissolving Ghost', she referred to the disjunction between the place she lived, and the mainly British stories she read as a child, as an 'imaginative displacement' (Mahy 2000: 32), recognizing a tension commonly felt by New Zealand writers, and acknowledging the pressure she felt to write her New Zealandness more strongly. Her fantasy novels fill what Anna Jackson terms the 'gap between her colonized imagination and everyday life' (2011: 48) with a distinctive blend of realism and fantasy that is local and international, even universal, as she entwines ordinary New Zealand life with myth, fantasy and fairytale. Mahy accounted for the scope of her frame of reference, saying that the 'dislocations' of that imaginative displacement 'made me a world reader rather than a local one, and they made me contingent rather than categorical' (2000: 33). As Clare Bradford comments, Mahy's work is embedded in place, but 'transnational' in its imaginative reach (2014: 113).

In appropriating classical material into New Zealand young adult fiction, Mahy overcomes her imaginative displacement through what we might call a transnational contingency, reading imaginatively across the world, responding to the elements and influences that come her way, and integrating them into her writing. In her Classical Reception, Mahy incorporates ancient, mythical and canonical cultural touchstones into an otherwise local set of stories, set in recognizable places around the South Island city of Christchurch, where she lived for most of her adult life. As her New Zealand teenage protagonists encounter supernatural and mythical beings, ancient religious and magical rites, literary and philosophical precedents and predecessors, Mahy makes those ordinary places (and the lives lived in them) resonate with intertextual and supernatural references and ideas. Bringing together place, time, fiction and classical intertextuality fills that 'gap', delivering an overall effect that is at once local and global, stable but also continually moving and shifting shape, in a constantly modified response to the dislocations in space and time that are part of the New Zealand experience.

This chapter explores four young adult novels that Mahy wrote in the 1980s: *The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance* (1984); *The Tricksters* (1986); *The Catalogue of the Universe* (published 1985, but written after *The Tricksters*); and *Memory* (1987). Though Classicism pervades her work, it is most clearly seen in these four novels. Two are fantasy novels; two are realist. Each is set around Christchurch, in the suburbs, the coast and the city; the protagonists range in age from fourteen to nineteen. Each draws on a different type of classical material: myths (of witchcraft, femininity, and the Underworld), Golden Age Roman literature and Greek philosophy. As she makes classical, mythic and literary references, Mahy embeds them into her teenage protagonists and the New Zealand they live in; producing a richly textured hybrid experience, in which ancient and modern combine.¹

Suburban Classical: *The Changeover*

In *The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance*, classical material may act as an invasive or colonizing force that must be overcome; her heroine becomes partly classical herself, in order to conquer it, enabling a hybrid, New Zealand identity, charged with imagination, and with intertextual power. Fourteen-year-old Christchurch teenager Laura Chant ‘changes over’ to become a witch, in order to defeat one of the *lemures* (ancient Roman spirits of the dead) that has attacked her little brother, Jacko. She has help from a trio of witches: Sorenson (Sorry), a prefect from her school, and his mother, Miryam and grandmother, Winter. Appropriately, in order to conquer a classical villain, Laura’s changeover is also classical: she undergoes a chthonic ritual of spiritual death and rebirth, entering and returning from the Underworld, ‘changed over’. Made into a ‘new type of creature’ (152), Laura can defeat the *lemur* and restore her brother to health. All the while, Laura (and through her, Mahy) reflects on the strangeness of these classical beings and events intertwining themselves into the fabric of ordinary New Zealand suburban life.

The Roman *lemur* can symbolize the colonizing (and outmoded) reach of classical and European cultures into New Zealand. The *lemur* masquerades as an elderly antique dealer, Carmody Braque, into whose shop Laura takes Jacko. Braque makes much of Jacko’s ‘newness’ and his own antiquity: “‘you’re all babies to me. I’m extremely old, thousands of years old. Don’t I look it?’” he asked, and Laura thought he did’ (20). She senses him exuding ‘the very smell . . . of rotting time’ (21) but does not recognize the danger he presents before Braque stamps an image on the little boy’s hand, a mark that enables him to enter the boy’s soul and possess his life-force. Going to Sorry and his family for help, and learning that Braque is a *lemur* that has ‘lived off many, many people’ (162) and found a body to prey upon its life-force, Laura learns that the only way to defeat this ancient wicked spirit is to become equally ancient herself. She must join the tradition of witchcraft, older than ‘the simplest societies’, by undergoing the changeover ritual (138). Once changed over, Laura defeats Braque, stamping him with her own image, breaching ‘his ancient substance’ (190) and reversing the flow of

life-force back to Jacko. Laura's defeat of Braque can be read as modern New Zealand youth defeating the outdated colonizing force of Europe. As Braque protests his fate, claiming he still has much relevance and much to live for, Laura unpityingly watches him shrink away, until he is nothing more than a pile of dead leaves that blow away in the wind.

More than merely tapping into her own antiquity, Laura becomes timeless and archetypal. Through the changeover ritual, she comes into magical, female and inherited powers that are ancient and timeless, and she does so by a journey both into the mystical Underworld and into the recesses of her psyche or imagination. Stages of Laura's changeover draw on elements of the classical *katabasis*, the journey into the Underworld (death) and return therefrom (rebirth). Sorry, who supports her on her journey, draws attention to classical precedent for her passage into the Underworld, when he asks her to hand over a ritual stone coin: "even to cross the Styx you have to pay the ferryman" (142). Like Orpheus, she is also warned not to look back. Furthermore, *The Changeover* draws on a melange of classical and other myths, including the symbols of the Grail Quest and the Tarot, and Grimms' Fairy Tales (Gose 1991). Laura joins Miryam and Winter, forming an eternal tripartite female figure associated with the moon: Laura, the Virgin (waxing moon), Miryam, the Mother (the full moon) and Winter, the Crone (waning moon). This triad connects with Roman myths of Luna, Greek myths of Selene and older female moon deities. Laura's changeover is explicitly feminine, enabling her to draw on her ancient and eternal feminine powers (of sexuality and fertility) to conquer Braque, a male invader and challenger: a neatly archetypal mapping of the teenage girl's transition from childhood to womanhood, underscoring the timeless relevance of adolescent rites of passage.

Laura is also a modern New Zealander, charged with influences and present contexts. Changing over, she sees the forces that made her: a road branching 'indefinitely' behind her (147). Through her father, she has Polynesian blood (152), linking her to the hybrid New Zealand identity of Pākehā and Māori. In her modern identity, she is familiar with televisions and motorbikes, suburbs and shopping malls: elsewhere, Laura reflects on the strangeness of talking about ancient magical practices over the telephone. This strangeness spills over into the broad daylight of the neat suburban street where she watches the *lemur* wither and die, noting 'the heavy centuries waiting to fall on him' (182) and exulting in her new powers.

To conquer Braque, Laura incorporates timeless, female antiquity into her teenage self, becoming a 'new kind of creature', acting 'through the power of charged imagination' (152). Though she exults in her newfound powers, Laura recognizes that she must put them away for later use and returns to ordinary life for a while. While she is hybrid, made up of familial, national, racial, magical, modern and ancient influences, she is also part of the ordinary world. Acting solely through the power of 'charged imagination' can be dangerous: Laura must remember what it is to be part of real life as well. And thus, through Laura's changeover, Mahy offers a way of overcoming imaginative displacement, drawing together the ancient and the modern, the transnational and the local, the magic and the real.

Harry and the Minotaur: *The Tricksters*

For Mahy, however, *The Changeover* seems to raise as many questions as it resolves, not least the role of the writer in encountering imaginative displacement. Written almost immediately following *The Changeover*, but published two years later, *The Tricksters* is a *Künstlerroman* set at a holiday house on the Banks Peninsula near Christchurch. Here, Mahy explores the literary aspects of Classical Reception through the coming-of-age of a seventeen-year-old writer called Harry (Ariadne) Hamilton, who contends with the seductions and threats of literary influences from across space and time. The Ariadne myth flows through the novel: Harry holds the clue to different labyrinths, including family secrets and her own writing ambitions; she also must battle minotaurs of different types (including another, ultimate, writer of the Ariadne myth – Ovid). As Harry comes of age, she becomes integrated into her surroundings, becoming a true writer who can incorporate the influences of the literature of the past with the land of the present.

Through a hubristic boast that the novel she is secretly writing will ‘alter the world’, causing ‘story and real’ to coexist (23), Harry unwittingly releases the ghost of Teddy Carnival, the son of the original builder of the house, who died as a young man, and is haunting the area. Teddy’s ghost appears in the triple form of three brothers, Ovid, Hadfield and Felix, each one representing a different aspect of personality: Ovid the intellect, Hadfield the instinct and Felix the emotions. They have taken their names from books in the old house (George Eliot’s novel *Felix Holt: The Radical*; John Hadfield’s anthology, *The Book of Love*; and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*), and as Adrienne Gavin observes, they represent different aspects of the European literary tradition, and embody different kinds of literary influence over Harry (Gavin 2015). Hadfield represents the anthologist; Felix the British domestic novel; and Ovid the interweaving of myth and legend. Harry must ‘learn to handle’ this influence ‘carefully lest its weight overwhelm her creative vision’; lest, like an invasive species of plant or animal, old European models threaten her new, native voice (Gavin 2015).

The Tricksters dramatizes the challenges facing the New Zealand writer and the New Zealand teenager: how to be original in a modern context, while acknowledging and incorporating the influences of the past, and how to have a charged imagination without overbalancing into ‘uncontrol’. Harry’s secret novel is a naive and derivative fantasy, in which a winged ‘lover-enemy’ named Belen overpowers a beautiful maiden. Into it, Harry has poured her adolescent desires for love and sexual passion – desires to be overwhelmed by her imaginary bird-man, like the mythical Leda, possessed by Jupiter in swan-form. The force of her desires and her naive and hubristic pleasure in writing a ‘faulty’ and derivative novel, allow the ghost through in the form of the three Tricksters.

As well as instinct and emotions, Hadfield and Felix represent aspects of literary influence to be conquered: Hadfield the cold art of the anthologist, and Felix the generative art of the woman’s novel. When Hadfield assaults Harry at night, she conquers him with a blow from her torch, rejecting his brutish version of sex; she conquers Felix with a kiss, and making love with him, incorporates his gentleness. But Ovid, intellect and mythographer, is the most difficult brother to battle, representing, as Gavin points

out, 'the weight of mythology, the classical canon, and the power of literature to transform and endure' (Gavin 2015: 180).

Ovid the master poet challenges Harry the neophyte by making fun of her work. He cruelly exposes its faults, by revealing it to Christobel, the older sister Harry admires and resents. Unaware that it is Harry's novel, Christobel reads it aloud to the family and mocks its flaws, dismissing her fantasy about the bird-man Belen as "a remarkably dreadful book, written by someone who's . . . secretly longing to be raped by a winged stallion" (27). All too publicly, Harry learns that her work is unoriginal and juvenile. Enraged, she reveals the secret of their father's infidelity and child with Christobel's friend Emma, a secret that has caused pressures and tensions in the family. For Claudia Marquis, that secret is the Minotaur at the heart of the Hamilton family labyrinth, and throughout the novel, Harry as Ariadne has led us towards that secret (2005: 62–83). Its exposure might have terrible repercussions, as Ovid seems to wish. But instead of turning on one another, the Hamiltons turn on Ovid and drive him and his brothers out of the house. Furthermore, Harry's exposure of the secret enables fresh air to rush in and some wounds to begin to heal. Harry takes one final action to defeat Ovid by burning her novel that she now realizes has dangerously 'altered the world' (23). As she does so, she sees a nearby figure melting and sees the faces of the Tricksters flickering in it: 'Ovid had wished to blaze, rather than live indistinguishably', comments the narrative, and 'Felix and Hadfield blazed with him as Harry burned her book' (243). Destroying her book means destroying the Tricksters' influence, and later Harry can write again, this time influenced by the world around her, rather than by literature from abroad.

Classical material in *The Tricksters* offers literary, mythological and archetypal touchstones for Harry's coming-of-age, from the plight of Leda to the cleverness of Ariadne, and it is significant that Harry's father, Jack, towards the end of the novel, comments that Harry is growing into the name he gave her. As Gose comments, Harry does not become an 'abandoned' or heartbroken Ariadne; her loyalty to her family sees her engage with two minotaurs, namely, the Tricksters, and the her father's secret (1991: 6–11). It also sees her engage, as Claudia Marquis (2015) notes, with two versions of Theseus: the lover-figure, Felix; and her own father, Jack – attractive, faithless and the object of family devotion.

Throughout the novel, Mahy uses classical referents to underscore Harry's growing feminine agency: as a writer and a creator, a lover, an enchantress and even a destroyer; shifting (metamorphosing) from owl-like Minerva, to Leda, to Medea and Pandora and, of course, coming into her own identity as Ariadne by the end of the novel. With Harry, Mahy writes a feminist revisioning of the Ariadne myth, in which Ariadne becomes the true storyteller, conquering the three male parts of the story: Theseus the faithless lover, the Minotaur, and the patriarchal system that writes it, in the form of Ovid. Harry's development, then, is more than merely rejecting classical myths from over the sea, it is rewriting them, incorporating them into her modern experience, as part of her family and connected to the land.

As she has contended with her literary foes, Harry has continually been aware of the beauty of the surrounding landscape: the sea, the hills and the bays of the Banks Peninsula,

formed from the exploded crater of an ancient volcano, an influence paradoxically both fresher and more ancient and lasting than the classical myths that run through the novel: 'the age of the rock, the volcano in which the rock had been born out of fire, and the salt water that had slowly shaped it over thousands of years' (25). Only once she has conquered the Carnival brothers, and incorporated their lessons into her writing, can she embrace that vision, in an epiphanic scene: 'she saw everything ... every blade of grass, every grain of sand, every wave on the beach ... things that she had seen many times before, but which now made themselves known to her in a wonderful way' (263). Mahy describes Harry's epiphany as a type of possession, not sexual, as Harry has mistakenly wished for earlier, but sublime: 'In the end she was indeed possessed by the brute blood of the air so powerfully but so delicately it was like no possession she had ever imagined' (263). This orgasmic and ecstatic vision of the land unites Harry's artistry with her place in the world: free to write her own country, she has overcome her own 'imaginative displacement', becoming the 'creator of the universe' in her own turn (Mahy 2000: 33).

'Partly mythological': *The Catalogue of the Universe*

In *The Catalogue of the Universe*, written after *The Tricksters*, but published before it, Mahy moves from creating the universe to trying to understand it. Angela Chase and Tycho Potter are in that hazily optimistic and trepidatious time of their last year of high school, on the brink of joining the adult world. Beautiful and romantic Angela and plain philosopher Tycho take different approaches to seeking certainty in the face of change, approaches underscored by their classical connections. Angela lives at the end of a perilous country road in a tumbledown house with her mother, Dido. Eager to reassure her child she was wanted, Dido had told her a romantic tale of lost love, instead of the truth: a brief and unsatisfactory affair. Believing Dido, Angela goes on a quest to find her father, but discovers him to be a playboy businessman; she discovers too that Dido has no wish to be reunited with this disappointing Aeneas. Her illusions shattered, Angela careers around the city, getting into trouble in bars, and having to be rescued by Tycho, who is watching over her from the 'edge of [her] adventure'. Tycho, the youngest of a conventional but tense suburban nuclear family, seeks stability from the laws of nature as discovered by the early Greek philosophers, but has difficulty in reconciling his thinking mind with his desire for feeling. When the two become lovers, those poles of intellect and emotion are brought together, enabling a balanced view of the world that accepts the occasional intrusion of irrationality.

Here, Mahy identifies how classical material offers touchstones for literary and philosophical approaches to life, feeling and thought. Angela's antecedents echo with tragic romance. Her mother, Dido, is a New Zealand version of Virgil's Queen of Carthage, seduced and abandoned by Aeneas en route to founding Rome. Before she kills herself, Virgil's Dido says wistfully, if she had had a 'little Aeneas' (*parvulus Aeneas*), she would not have felt so deserted or betrayed (*Aeneid* 4.305ff.). Indeed, Mahy's Dido has made a good life for herself and Angela. Meanwhile, Angela reflects that Dido is a 'partly

mythological' figure: scything the lawn in the moonlight, like an ancient goddess of the harvest. Like an ancient oracle, Dido predicts the car crash that occurs at the end of the novel; though as a modern mother, she does not predict the effects of her romanticizing on her daughter. Angela, trying to provide a fairytale ending to an old story that can offer no such resolution, is defeated by both parents: Roland's lack of interest is compounded by Dido's fury at her interference (and at having her falsehoods exposed). More than her disappointment at finding her father to be a thoroughly ordinary Aeneas, it is the rift between herself and Dido that sends Angela into the night to be rescued by Tycho (whose name is derived from Tyche, the Greek for 'luck'). It is that rift, too, that is healed by Dido's neighbours, Phil and Jerry Cherry, crashing their car on Dry Creek Road, causing Dido and Angela to reunite at the crash site, each fearing that the other has perished. Though this crash seems like a somewhat implausible *deus ex machina* device in an otherwise realistic novel, its emotional logic resolves the rift, connecting them both to the uncanny and 'partly mythological' aspects of their story, and their life on the edge of the city, away from ordinary things and people.

In contrast to these mythological women, ordinary suburban Tycho finds solace in the stable continuity of ancient Greek philosophy and astronomy. He pins quotations from Democritus above his bed: 'Nothing exists but atoms and the void.' His brother, Richard, dismisses this as 'something some old Greek said a million years ago'. Tycho, who is of course named after the great Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe (1546–1601), is struck both by it as 'something to think about,' but also by its continuing to have meaning throughout the aeons: "I mean Democritus said that in 430 BC ... 430 BC," Tycho repeated as if he expected Richard to be somehow moved by this fact' (45). Richard is not moved, but Angela recognizes the snippets of information he passes on, such as Anaximander's observations about the moonlight (1), or Pythagoras' theories of irrational numbers (58), and refers to them herself as 'mysterious victor[ies] for the human mind' (1).

Angela represents for Tycho the 'wobble' in the symmetry of the universe: the disruptive influence of feeling. As he waits on the edge of her passionate adventure, he tries to reconcile his contradictory desires for stability and emotion, reading snatches from 'a fat brown book named *A History of Western Philosophy*', 'juggling with small words and narrow shades of meaning,' aware that powerful riddles were being asked and revealed, which might be rich in amazement' (83), and finding within a way of integrating his desires, for feeling and for intellect:

'Matter is not unchanging substance,' he read, 'but simply a way of grouping events.' His interest sharpened. Some events apparently belonged to a group that could be regarded as material things, others such as light rays could not. 'It is events that are the stuff of the world.' Tycho stared at the page.

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Reading this passage facilitates Tycho's epiphany: 'The separate worlds of thought and feeling seemed on the point of rushing together so that he would stop feeling like two

people jammed into the same skin, and become the same man, thinker and feeler melted together' (84). While Tycho learns to bring together intellect and emotion to understand the fluidity and flexibility of the universe, Angela later works out how to counter his continual intellectualizing. Taller than he is, she puts the eponymous book-within-a-book, *The Catalogue of the Universe*, to practical use: giving it to him to stand on so that he can kiss her, bringing together their worlds of feeling and thought.

The Catalogue of the Universe is realist, not supernatural or fantasy fiction, but mythic elements pervade even Tycho's attempts to elevate his life beyond the tensions of his ordinary family. For instance, he dips into *A History of Western Philosophy* like his own kind of *sortes Virgilianae*, transforming his quotidian existence through the powers of thought and feeling. The timelessness of myth gives way to a fragmentary but reassuring engagement with thought that enables him to live life fully. Similarly, Tycho's intellect offsets the potential unbalance of Angela's emotional quest, which contains in it the echoes, but not the tragedy, of the ancient story of Dido and Aeneas.

Classical writers and philosophers still offer powerful truths from the past, but they function as guides rather than as rule-books. Perhaps it is testimony to modern New Zealand life that it is able to incorporate them, slant-wise, incomplete, yet part of an ongoing dialogue about what it means to be in the world.

Memory and the modern city

In the fourth novel of the quartet, *Memory*, the classical imaginary reflects the conflicts and disruptions of adolescent urban alienation. *Memory* is the story of nineteen-year-old Jonny Dart, a dancer suffering from depression, memory loss and survivor guilt, related to the death of his sister, Janine, five years earlier. On the anniversary of her death, Jonny takes drunkenly to the city, seeking their friend, Bonny Benedicta, who was the only other witness to Janine's fall from a cliff, during a game they were playing. Jonny wants Bonny to tell him what really happened. Did he push Janine, or had she simply fallen in a terrible accident? Investing her with the magical powers of a prophetess or Sibyl, he trusts her to see more clearly than he can. As young teenagers, the three had played with magic and storytelling, constructing a fantasy of quasi-mythical characters: Bonny was 'the Pythoness', wearing an ouroboros ring (a snake with its tail in its mouth) and claiming to have 'married magic' (82). Jonny was the 'wolf-man', dangerous in his wildness. Their role-playing tips over into reality, when Janine fell, seeming to answer a prophecy that Bonny has made. After Janine's death, their parents discourage further contact, and Jonny does not know Bonny's whereabouts. Seeking her, he goes into the city night, and meets another seeming prophetess, an old woman called Sophie, who is wandering in a supermarket car park. 'Are you the one?' (95), Sophie asks Jonny. He does not know the answer, but realizing she is suffering from senile dementia, walks her to her home, in a block of houses scheduled for demolition by developers. Over the course of the week of the novel's timeframe, he pieces together fragments of her memories (her dementia acting as a parallel to his own amnesia), learning about the death of her

husband, and about her lost lover, and discovering that she is being exploited by local youths who are falsely charging her rent. Another chance encounter reveals that Bonny is living in a flat next door, and studying literature at university. Bonny reassures him that he did not kill Janine. She had, however encouraged him to tell a lie to the authorities: that he had not been on the cliff edge with Janine when she died. The lie worked its way into Jonny's subconscious, mixing with his feelings of grief, loss, and sibling rivalry to create a set of false and contradictory memories. As Jonny gradually puts together the pieces of his own mind, he also seeks to protect Sophie, and in a climactic scene he leaps from Bonny's balcony to fight the thieves. Alison Waller (2015: 146–65) notes this leap mimics Janine's fall, breaking through his memories, and restoring Jonny's sense of agency.

In this novel about the power of the mind to shatter and to heal, Mahy depicts a young man struggling with a fragmented psyche, and clutching at women he believes offer clues to the meaning of the past and have the power to heal him. Heather Scutter (1995: 9–14) observes that Janine, Bonny and Sophie form a triad of ancient patriarchal stereotypes: 'Janine the seductress, represent[ing] sexuality and death; Bonny the moon-driven Sibyl, and Sophie the crone', and reads Jonny's triangulation amongst them as Mahy's exploration of feminine archetypes fragmented through the male gaze. Strikingly, Jonny invests both Sophie and Bonny with the power of a female goddess or oracle, believing that their powers to foretell the future will enable him to understand the past. In this formulation, Bonny is the Pythoness, associated with the Sibyl of Delphi, utterer of prophecy and wisdom. Sophie proclaims herself 'angel of wisdom' (133); her name, too, is associated with Sophia, the Greek personification of wisdom. Yet as Scutter points out (1995: 9–14), each is an ordinary woman, invested by Jonny with oracular and magical abilities, as for instance in this scene where Sophie looks up at a blue-painted cafeteria ceiling:

'It's a cloudless sky! Quite cloudless!' Sophie announced, staring raptly up into the air. Jonny looked up too. The ceiling was painted plain blue. Under Sophie's gaze it took on depth and height. Refusing to let his eyes be stopped by the plain surface, Jonny stared intently into it, just as she was doing. It quietly grew deep – deeper – until it went on forever.

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Is Jonny hallucinating, as he gradually detoxes from an alcoholic binge, tormented by survivor guilt, post-traumatic stress disorder, and lacking any parental or familial figure to guide him? Or is this how he actually sees the world? When they finally meet, Bonny says Jonny's imagination has always been overactive: "you always seemed so . . . unprotected . . . from people like Janine, and from ideas as well – from visions, theories, all sorts of frenzies" (268). We begin to suspect it might be Jonny who is the oracle, who sees the world differently from ordinary people.

Bonny blames herself for meddling with Jonny's imagination in her pretend-role as the Pythoness. A common theme in Mahy's work is the danger of underestimating the power of story. Here that power is diffused between storyteller and listener: drawn

together in Jonny's imagination as he listens to Bonny's stories, and translates them into his world through his expressive powers. Jonny and Janine had been dancers: a tap-dancing duo, who performed in humiliating (to Jonny) but lucrative fast-food commercials. Jonny's hair was dyed blond to match Janine's, symbolic of a suppression of his true talents. Jonny was the true dancer, and his expressive abilities (stifled partly by their parents) were shattered by his grief and guilt. Jonny may therefore be another type of mythical figure; an off-kilter version of Dionysus, drunken, dancing dizzily across the city. He may also be part of an Eleusinian mystery, descending into the chaos of the city, and through that descent righting past wrongs: clearing up the mystery of Janine's death by finding Bonny, assuaging his guilt by helping Sophie.

In an extraordinary scene towards the end of the novel, all Jonny's visions seem to come together at once. Dancing in the rain on the balcony between Sophie's house and Bonny's flat, he overhears some thugs planning to attack Sophie, and leaps to her defence. As they scuffle on the street, Sophie comes out of the door in her petticoat, with two sets of false teeth in her mouth:

She looked like an old, old spirit, her thin silver hair turned into a nest by the phosphorescent street light, her eyes nothing but two black holes under her high forehead, her mouth bursting with more teeth than any natural mouth could hold. Her lips were stretched thin trying to accommodate the impossible number of teeth, teeth which extruded over her lower lip, making it seem as if she were beginning to devour herself.

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Inspired or perhaps shocked by this vision, Jonny fights on until the police come, and Bonny emerges from her own flat. This is the scene in which he recovers his mind – confessing to Bonny that “sometimes I think I pushed [Janine]” (254), and begins differentiating between the real and the imaginary. “Once you start thinking something like that, how do you stop? It makes itself real,” he says, and his healing begins (255). In the resolution to the novel, Jonny moves in with Sophie to care for her until she can be found a place in a rest home, and he returns to his true self and his identity. When Sophie asks him again, at the end of *Memory*, “Are you the one?” Jonny is able to say: “Sophie, I think I am the one. I truly think I am” (278).

This novel of urban alienation and individual recovery sees Jonny find help and build a community in a seemingly derelict corner of the city, surrounded by thieves and destroyers. To some degree it has a chthonic quality – Jonny plunges into the Underworld, seeking the ghost of his dead sister, and bringing Sophie (and perhaps Bonny) into the light with him. To some degree, too, Jonny's journey is like Angela's in *The Catalogue of the Universe*, in which he seeks to resolve the past, but finds that he must make his own future, with companions of his choosing. Unlike Angela and Tycho, Harry or Laura, Jonny is not a self-aware character: he does not impose a learned understanding of classical matters on the people and places he encounters. As a dancer, he does not work with words, but with feelings and sensations, and in his encounters with the broken

oracles of Bonny and Sophie, Mahy makes the point that the past only speaks cryptically to us, even when it is part of the present.

As Sarah Winters perceptively notes (2008: 408–25), the action of *Memory* is shot through with reflection about Māori and Pākehā identity. Bonny and her sister Samantha are mixed-race: Samantha is half Māori and half Pākehā, while Bonny has Māori, Chinese, Indian and other races mingling in her blood. Samantha has become an activist, taking the name of Hinerangi, and has become involved in political protest related to the Māori Land Rights marches. New Zealand society is made up of more than the dominant European settler culture, and that culture is more fragmented than it realizes – displaced imaginatively through time, but also in danger of displacing itself from the land it inhabits. Jonny's disruptively Dionysian ramblings, as well as his mistaken reliance on Bonny and Sophie as ancient but only dubiously powerful seers and oracles, warn us that classical models offer only an incomplete understanding of the place and time in which this New Zealand teenager lives. As Winters argues, by 'breaking down Jonny's European inner landscape' (2008: 415), Mahy works to expose the 'fault lines' running through New Zealand society (2008: 422), and the incompleteness of the European frame of reference in engaging with them. In contrast to witchy Laura, writer Harry, and thinkers Tycho and Angela, Jonny is not conscious of the incomplete, or fragmentary quality of his inner frame of reference. But by overcoming past trauma, he becomes a figure of the present, returning to his dancing: "once you know something it's a pity to let it all go," he says to Bonny. "And when I really get into it, I know I'm holding the world together" (274).

Holding the world together

In the changing ways that Mahy integrates classical myth, literature, philosophy and religion into her novels of New Zealand adolescent experience, we can see her work mimic the 'imaginative displacement' she identifies as a key problematic as a New Zealand writer attempting to integrate European literary forms into her world (and vice versa). In some cases – *The Changeover* and *The Tricksters* – classical influence pushes into the New Zealand of her novels: the *lemur* and Ovid attempting to control Laura and Harry's experiences and worldviews. In other cases – *The Catalogue of the Universe* and *Memory* – classical influence is something the protagonists seek out, as a frame of reference, or a touchstone, or a way of looking at the world, offering continuity, but only an incomplete continuity, for the world, the new, and the now, are always present, always competing. Imaginative displacement, then, can only partly be overcome by looking to past models of literature, art or thought: its resolution requires an integration of past and present, mythical or real, old or new.

One final point. Through these novels run strands of exploration of what it is to come of age, with an emphasis, as Roberta Seelinger Trites observes, on embodiment: 'how inseparable embodiment is from consciousness, and how troublesome rigidly defined binaries of gender can be' (2014: 141). Mahy's use of myth both draws attention to the universal elements of adolescent coming of age or embodiment, and highlights its

specificities in the disjuncture between the classical and the contemporary. The novels discussed here were written in a period when women writers (and Classicists) were re-examining and reappropriating classical material to recover women's history in antiquity and to connect it with women's experience in the contemporary world. Mahy's novels can readily be situated within that wider discussion of feminist revisioning of classical material, as Fiona Cox and Elena Theodorakopoulos suggest: 'not just appropriating the classics for those who had previously been excluded from them, but on examining the other issues that form the fabric of women's lived experience' (2013: 289).

To this we might add that Mahy's appropriation of classics enables her to examine issues that form the fabric of *young people's* lived experience, for Mahy wrote almost exclusively for children and adolescents, and her choice of audience likely shaped her choice of myths.² As Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer notes on the attraction of the Orpheus myth for a wide array of children's novels, particular myths supply 'a universal topic that still has a strong appeal for the present generation, since the issues of friendship, love, and death play an important role in young people's philosophical thinking' (2016: 306). Classical themes provide powerful and resonant narrative patterns that respect young people's experiences and concerns.³

In Mahy's exploration of complex themes (family, sexuality, identity, trauma), she integrates classical material into stories of contemporary New Zealand adolescent experience, all the while meditating on what it means for her young characters, and for her writing self. So where post-colonial and feminist approaches may emphasize the power struggle involved in resisting (or using) the patriarchal or colonizing elements of classical material, and may use the idea of struggle, or turbulence, or displacement productively, in Mahy's work I see an approach that acknowledges turbulence, but also seeks to help her young readers navigate that turbulence, to help them orient themselves as they come of age, and to use what they learn to overcome displacement: to find ways to hold themselves and the world together. "Once you know something it's a pity to let it go," says Jonny Dart to Bonny Benedicta, at the end of *Memory* (274). He is referring to his dancing, but his words resonate with Mahy's integrative approach to the echoes and fragments of learning, art and culture that travel from ancient Europe to modern New Zealand, are part of her young readers' heritage and frame of reference, and offer ways of seeing, and being, in the world.

CHAPTER 11

CLASSICAL INFLUENCES IN BERNARD BECKETT'S *GENESIS*, *AUGUST* AND *LULLABY*

Babette Pütz

Bernard Beckett is one of the most popular young adult fiction writers in New Zealand. *Genesis* (2006), the first in a trilogy that is the focus of this chapter, has won numerous literary prizes and was listed as a 2007 Storylines Notable Young Adult Fiction Book.¹ The trilogy, which also includes *August* (2011) and *Lullaby* (2015), is set in the future. Beckett uses intertextuality, particularly classical allusions and sci-fi settings, to encourage readers to reflect on current debates in New Zealand, inviting them to see the issues in a wider context and to draw connections to their own experiences. While most novels of this kind work predominantly with references to classical myth, Beckett's focus is on ancient philosophy (see Riverlea 2012: 26; Kümmerling-Meibauer 2016: 305). This is especially the case in *Genesis* and *August*, while classical references in *Lullaby* are more general (such as allusions to ancient theatre). Here I analyse the ways Beckett uses classical influences as literary devices. I discuss the ways classicism is employed and functionalized as a foil to the treatment of contemporary issues, as a means to underline the philosophical themes of the books, and as a vehicle to reflect on the use of stories and myths.

The trilogy has several overarching themes. The major themes of *Genesis* are humanity, free will and the just state. *August* develops these themes while also addressing issues of identity, education, the use and abuse of power by figures of authority, and friendship. The title of *Lullaby* may be an allusion to the play *Rockaby* by another author of the same surname, Samuel Beckett. *Rockaby* refers to the lullaby about the baby whose cradle is in the treetop (about to fall). Like Samuel Beckett's play, Bernard Beckett's novel deals with the themes of birth, death and the fragility of human life from the children's song, as well as those of identity, relationships and medical ethics.

Genesis

Genesis is set in a small island nation (the Republic) which, after war and plague, has isolated itself, refuses entry to any refugees, and has been taken over by creatures of artificial intelligence. The story focusses on Anaximander, a student enduring a gruelling examination to enter the Academy (the elite institution that runs the Republic). She has studied with her tutor, Pericles, and her topic is Adam Forde, a border guard who, against orders, saved a refugee called Eve. As punishment, Adam must take part in an experiment in which he lives with Art, a creature of artificial intelligence in its early developmental stages, in order to further his development.

Antipodean Antiquities

Many of the discussions with Art have been recorded and studied by Anaximander, who has put several of them into holographic presentations, for which she provides her own interpretations to the examiners. The discussions of Adam and Art focus on the question of whether human or artificial intelligence is superior, what 'being human' means, and what are 'ideas'. In the end, even though he was programmed with an inability to harm humans, Art tricks Adam to help him escape, kills him and transfers his own information to all other AI units. This, however, includes the human characteristics that Art acquired from Adam.

Eventually, we discover that the Academy specializes in finding AI units in which Adam's spirit is pronounced. It is ultimately revealed that not only the examiners themselves but also Anaximander are AI creatures, and that Anaximander was called to the examination for the members of the Academy to determine her rebellious streak. In the last scene, Pericles explains all of this to her and permanently disconnects her. In a discussion of Beckett's narrative technique, with special emphasis on the omniscient third-person narrator, Sarah Giffney (2011: 65–7) concludes that readers do not notice that Anaximander is an android until the end because of Beckett's narrative structure. Rather than an overt narrative, Giffney suggests that Beckett allows his readers to insert their own assumptions and biases to fill the informative gaps, which are deliberately left open.

August

This novel is set in an environment that suggests a mediaeval walled city, under the rule of a powerful and oppressive church, surrounded by 'heathen lands' (with access to modern technology). The City of God has a strict class system. The so-called 'people of the night' allegedly lack a soul and are denied entry to the city during daytime, as well as any of the comforts and consolations the church provides its followers.

Teenagers Tristan and Grace tell each other their life stories after a car crash. They hang upside-down on a cliff, in the dark, severely injured, not knowing if rescue is possible. Tristan once attended a boys' church school, St Augustine's, which trains students in philosophical enquiry through interrogation. Tristan becomes intrigued by the people of the night and, one night, watching them, sees Grace. They look at each other; Grace thinks he is an angel and Tristan falls in love with her. As a punishment for leaving school at night, Tristan is locked inside the monastery for two years. He undergoes tests and experiments, directed by the school's rector, who uses Tristan to prove that there is no free will. Finally, Tristan can leave and spend time in the heathen settlements. Even though Grace's upbringing is different from Tristan's, they both share an interest in, and compassion for, the people of the night. Grace is expelled from a convent for helping them, works as a prostitute and eventually leaves for the heathen settlements, where Tristan sees her. He steals a car, picks up Grace and causes the terrible car crash.

Tristan finally admits that he is obsessed with proving the rector wrong and, to demonstrate the existence of free will, he plans to do the opposite of what he desires and tries to kill Grace. But, in a final act of free will, the two of them rock the car to make

it fall down the cliff further, hoping to be more visible to possible rescuers, but also risking death.

Lullaby

This novel is set in a world like our own, but more advanced in stem cell research. Stem cells can be used to re-grow any organs except the brain. A unique opportunity to experiment with the restoration of the brain offers itself to scientist Dr Huxley, when eighteen-year-old Theo has an accident in which his body remains intact, but his brain function is permanently obliterated. In an unprecedented, risky procedure, Dr Huxley tries to copy the information from the brain of Theo's twin-brother Rene into Theo's brain. To proceed, he needs Rene's consent and an assessment of Rene's mental state to determine whether he is fit to make such an ethically ambiguous and personally risky decision.

Rene is at hospital to see Theo and to be assessed by Maggie, a psychologist. He tells her his life story as an identical twin, focusing on the brothers swapping roles and pretending to be each other, and their growing apart over school success and girls. Theo is the dominant twin, but Rene stands up to him to fight for Emily, the girl they are both interested in. However, feeling guilty, Rene finally offers to swap roles with Theo, so he can spend a day with Emily. They go ahead with their plan, but on the day of the swap Theo is electrocuted. Realizing how much he needs his twin, Rene decides to undergo the procedure. Before it starts, Emily gives Rene a secret cut in his arm pit (2015: 193). Since both boys will wake up from the procedure, not just looking identical, but also with identical memories, this will be the only means of identification for them and Emily.

Rene has been told that after the brain-information transfer, he would return to his old life, while Theo would be sent away for a year, so that each can make new, different memories and regain distinct identities. The procedure is successful, but in diary entries (printed on opposing pages, one in bold print, the other in normal print) each boy describes what happens after he has woken from the anaesthesia. Their reports are almost identical, but then it is Rene (with the scar) who is taken away by the doctors, not Theo.

New Zealand settings and current topics

Two of Beckett's novels are clearly set in New Zealand, the third possibly. *Genesis* is set in an island nation once called Aotearoa. In *Lullaby*, the mention of typical vegetation indicates that it is set in New Zealand: manuka/New Zealand tea-tree (2015: 100), kanuka/New Zealand white tea-tree (2015: 191), pohutukawa/New Zealand Christmas tree (2015: 191). The setting of *August* is unclear, although it has swamplands (2011: 12), and a recurrent theme is the cold climate that can kill humans who live on the streets (2011: 149) and make strawberries a rare treat for the rich (2011: 59). We are not told

if a climate change has occurred or if the weather has always been like this. A single reference to a bleating lamb (2011: 39) might be a vague hint of a New Zealand setting.

Many of the topics reference current debates in contemporary New Zealand (and other Western societies), including education, politics, philosophy, ethics, religion, history, science and medicine. Beckett raises questions about individual freedom versus state surveillance, robots taking over from humans, science as opposed to religion, education set against religion, stem cell research and euthanasia, war (including biological threats), terrorism, refugees, poverty, inequality, homelessness, colonialization and colonial guilt. Colonialization in *Genesis* has occurred from the inside, not the outside, which throws the robots' self-portrayal as peaceful creatures into question.

These topics connect to themes of self-determination or free will, identity and humanity, or – as the ancients would have called it – the soul. Beckett uses classical references to bring these contemporary themes into focus. For instance, the theme of a rigidly structured society with different levels of privilege may remind readers of current discussions of different groups in New Zealand society having varying access to, and success with, education and a reasonable standard of living. Such issues are exemplified by inequalities in housing, and tertiary enrolment and retention statistics for Māori and Pasifika students (Howden-Chapman 2015; Wikaire et al. 2017).² References to Plato and the *Republic* provide Beckett's depiction of this rigidly class-based society in *Genesis* and *August* with a historical, philosophical background, which helps explain why Anax in *Genesis* does not question the fairness and appropriateness of such a system. Or, against a classical background, the difficulty in determining the existence of free will in *August* is shown to be not only Tristan's and the rector's obsession, but a wide-ranging philosophical topic.

Philosophical questions

Beckett's philosophical discussions are loosely based on ancient philosophy, mostly dealing with the philosophical themes in a popularized manner, making complex questions accessible to a young adult audience. His books deal with such questions as: What makes us human? Is there free will? What is love? How important is identity? What is the ideal state?

The question of free will has been discussed by philosophers since classical antiquity. The Pre-Socratics explored the question of human free will in relation to the Olympian gods, querying how far human will is determined by them or by pre-existing causes. Democritus (Fragment B 125 DK, also A1 (45) DK p. 84 line 18) and Leucippus (Fragment B 2 DK) discussed what we call 'determinism' (everything happens for a reason, nothing by chance). Plato's Socrates (*Protagoras* 345d–e) proposed the idea that morally wrong actions are determined by human ignorance. And Epicurus (Diogenes Laertius 10.133) brought the discussion of free will into clearer focus, which was continued by the Stoics who argued for the importance of human moral responsibility over necessity.

The most striking references to ancient philosophy in Beckett's trilogy are the names of characters. Most names in *Genesis* are those of ancient Greek philosophers or statesmen. The protagonist is called Anaximander, her tutor Pericles, and another student being examined concurrently to Anax is named Socrates. Also mentioned are Plato (2006: 14, who set up the Republic in response to global threat); Aristotle (2006: 50, Plato's lieutenant who made all decisions when Plato was old) and Thales (2006: 57, Anax' best friend). The philosopher-names underscore characters' membership of the class of philosophers in the Republic's structure. As ancient Greek philosophers tended to be male, even the females of this class in *Genesis* have masculine Greek names. Only the name Helena (2006: 15, Plato's adviser and architect of the Republic's social structure) differs; being female and connected to neither ancient philosophy nor political leadership. We do not know enough about Beckett's Helena to make any connections between her and the eponymous mythical character.

The names are chosen carefully. Anaximander is named after the sixth-century Greek philosopher, Anaximander of Miletus who wrote a prose treatise, *On the Nature of Things*, which included an account of the origins of human life. Beckett alludes to this in one of the twists that are characteristic of his classical references. At the end of her examination, Anax finds out about the origin of robotic life, not – as the reader might expect – human life. Moreover, we learn that the success of the robots leads to the extinction of humans.

During the break after the first part of her examination, Anax converses with Socrates, the other student being examined (2006: 41–2). They believe they are not allowed to reveal their special topics to each other. It is crucial at this point in the story that this information is withheld from both the examinees (and the readers) because both are only to find out at the end of the novel that everyone is tested on the same topic – Adam Forde – to determine the existence of their rebellious streak (2006: 138–9). Socrates' last words to Anax are: "Be careful . . . They know more than you think" (2006: 42). This is a twist, typical of Beckett's writing, on the so-called Socratic paradox: 'I know that I know nothing.'³ This sinister warning gives Anax and the reader the first hint of danger, even though we cannot understand its full implications at this point. A classically educated reader may remember that the historical Socrates was sentenced to death, which, as we find out later, is also likely to happen to Beckett's Socrates after his examination (because of alleged non-conformity to the state in both cases).

Plato is a fitting name for the founder of Beckett's Republic and leader of the Academy. Beckett's Republic uses several practices also employed by its ancient Greek predecessor (albeit a thought experiment only); most notably a class system led by philosophers and a strict social control but with a futuristic, scientific twist; namely, young children's genetic material is evaluated to decide the class to which they belong (2006: 15). Yet again, Beckett employs a classical reference to comment on modern (or possible future) ethical problems.

A central topic of Plato's *Republic* is justice and how it brings happiness and virtue when achieved in society. Socrates argues that justice belongs to the finest class of goods and should be welcomed for its own sake because it leads to a happy life (358a), justice

being the natural order of the soul (444d–e, 580b–c). Glaucon asks Socrates whether a just or unjust person is happier (361d). Socrates answers that the just man is happier. He then connects justice with other positive attributes: “‘Then if a good and just person has decisively that much more pleasure than the bad and unjust person, will he not also have a life incalculably greater in elegance, beauty and virtue?’” (588a).⁴ Finally, Socrates takes the discussion of the connection of justice and happiness in the individual to the *polis*: “‘So there will be no difference between a just man and a just city, so far as the characteristic of justice goes’” (435b, trans. Lee 1955). In Plato’s just society, the wise ruling class is responsible for the happiness and wellbeing of the other classes (White 1988: 403). Socrates describes an ideal society where all citizens are ‘akin and friendly’ (590d), which leads to harmony (see Schuller 1968: 12). This sounds like Anax’ view of her state as a safe and peaceful society, led by just leaders (2006: 113).

The ancient Plato’s focus on justice for a happy and virtuous life, however, has been ingeniously perverted in Beckett’s Republic in *Genesis*. Here the philosopher-leaders at first seem to be just but we discover they are AI creatures that have taken over by force and eliminated all humans. They present as peaceful and lacking aggression (so justifying their brutal colonization), which turns out to be a lie. In the Republic, new ideas are discouraged and the Republic is shown to be struggling. For Jonathan Ball (2011: 170), this shows a pessimistic view of the future, as typical for young adult science fiction. Ball analyses the claim that young adult science fiction as a genre is socially conservative, especially in its technophobia. And technophobia is indeed present in *Genesis*, as the AI creatures have eliminated humanity and victimize members of their own species. However, Ball rightly notes, on a deeper level, Beckett’s novel ‘valorizes and elegizes radicality and subversion’ (2011: 170).

The state’s leaders, the Academy, are concerned with preserving the ideologically crumbling Republic, even if it means deceiving the population with a foundation myth heavily manipulated to fit this purpose, and executing non-conformists like Anax. The state-approved version of the myth of Adam and Art insists on the peacefulness of the robots that have supplanted humans. According to the myth, Art killed Adam by accident (2006: 139–40). That the robots are said to lack human aggression thereby portrays them as morally superior to humans, thus legitimizing their elimination of humans for a peaceful society.

The novel’s central topic of the foundation of a new state under a newly created species – that is, a creation myth – is highlighted through intertextuality, specifically in the names used in the Myth of Adam and Art. The myth’s key characters are of an earlier, human generation of inhabitants of the Republic and they have Biblical names: Adam, Eve, Joseph (Adam’s watch partner) and Rebekah (Adam’s wrestling partner). However, the story of the Creation and the Fall tells of the creation of AI and the transfer of ‘original sin’, namely human aggression, through Art’s betrayal and killing of Adam.⁵

This tale of founding a state through colonialism recalls the way ancient foundation myths were used; for instance, that of Thebes, in which Cadmus, before he can found his city, must slaughter a local monster, a vicious water dragon that has killed his

companions. He is instructed by Athena to sow the dragon's teeth into the ground, and fierce warriors are created from them: the Spartoi. When Cadmus throws a rock into their midst, they fight each other until only five remain. Eventually, peace is secured and the Spartoi help Cadmus build his city, which is later named Thebes. Here Cadmus must kill another dangerous monster and trick its equally aggressive descendants – symbolic of a local people – into killing each other. Five survive, as opposed to the original human inhabitants of the Republic of *Genesis*, who are all killed. Like the surviving Spartoi, who have suppressed their aggression after the founding of Thebes, the inhabitants of Beckett's Republic have kept some of Adam Forde's human character traits (which they are supposed to suppress). Moreover, justifications for a group's superiority over another through mythical explanations (and the manipulation of myth) are not just trademarks of the colonialism of more recent times, but the same strategy was employed in antiquity. Indeed, Beckett seems to base his myth on the manipulated foundation myth, the so-called 'Noble Lie', of Plato's *Republic* 414b–415d.

Both Plato's *Republic* and Beckett's *Genesis* deal with the ideal state, justice and humanity. In Plato's *Republic* 4.439c–d, the three parts of the human soul are discussed: reason (the interest of the whole); spirit (emotions); and desire (personal interest). Adam Forde personifies spirit and desire, and Art personifies reason. The ancient Plato demands the subordination of both spirit and desire to reason (to the detriment of individuality). This is also what Beckett's Academy expects of their citizens in exchange for a peaceful life. Like antiquity's Plato, Beckett describes an (apparent) utopia, with inhabitants who respect each other, do their work gladly, and live in peace. Likewise, Anax describes her country as "[t]he finest society the planet had ever seen" (2006: 113). Geoff Miles (in Jackson et al. 2011: 91–2) compares Anax' praise of her state with Pericles' praise of Athenian democracy in the Funeral Oration (Thucydides, *Histories* 2.37–41). Here it is important to note, however, that neither this speech nor Thucydides is mentioned in the novel.

As discussed, Pericles is the name of Anax' tutor of whom Anax is extremely fond, and trusts. All the greater is the shock for her (and for the reader), when he enters the examination room at the end of the novel, reveals that his job is to find mutants like Anax who carry Adam Forde's legacy, and finally terminates Anax. The Athenian Pericles was known for being incorruptible and far-sighted (Thucydides 2.65.4–8), and similar traits seem to be echoed in Beckett's Pericles. This is particularly evident in the last scene where it is obvious how fond he is of Anax. Nevertheless, he does what he needs to do as a member of the Academy and kills her for the 'good' of the state. That he shows the pain this causes him gives Anax some comfort:

There was a crack in Pericles' façade. The smile that crinkled his face was as old and weak as moonlight. He walked slowly forward and put his hands on his student's shoulders. Anax felt a surge of warmth towards him, for the way he looked at her then, and the pain she knew this caused him.

2006: 143

Anax' emotion, especially when she feels sorry for Pericles who is about to kill her (2006: 143), shows the strength of Adam Forde's legacy inside her. It was not just human aggression that was transferred from Adam, but also compassion.⁶ Note that an act of compassion – Adam rescuing the refugee girl, Eve, against the orders of a border guard – was also the catalyst for the historical events discussed in *Genesis*.

Pericles' funeral oration has been criticized as a 'one-sided "performance-piece" for the moment' that does not represent the truth (Grethlein 2010: 220–5; in Hawthorn 2014: 60). It sounds almost like an advertisement for Athens. The same is true for Anax' praise of her Republic. In due course, she will find out that the apparent freedom of individuals in her Republic and the alleged virtuous leadership of the Academy are lies. Anax learns that the Republic has deceived its citizens by manipulating the foundation myth of Adam and Art, just as readers learn that the novel has deceived them about the species of Anax and the other characters.

This reminds one of the 'Noble Lie' of Plato's *Republic* 414b–415d, which claims that people were made by the Earth, and therefore they should strive to take care of her. They should also see all other citizens as their brothers and sisters. The purpose of this part of the myth is to make the citizens care for their city and work for its best interests. In its second part, the 'Noble Lie' tells the citizens that, while they were made by Earth, God mixed different metals in each person. These determine the class to which each citizen belongs, so here the class system is explained as something inherent in each person. This myth is not pure invention by Plato, but combines some elements of the Cadmeian myth of autochthony (Apollodorus 3.4.1–2) and Hesiod's myth of the Ages (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 109–201).

The myth of Adam and Art is more detailed in that many parts of it are based on extant 'historical' sources,⁷ such as transcripts of entire conversations between Adam and Art. It does not focus on the genesis of humans, but that of robots, explaining how they took over from humans. The focus is on the manipulative power of historical revisionism. Myth is used as a means of social control by the Academy. Here the novel's link to antiquity is helpful in understanding the connection of myth and state interest. It does not matter that the myth of Adam and Art is a futuristic story about the power struggle of man and machine. Its central myth is a foundation myth, a genre that goes back to antiquity. Such foundation myths are supposed to instil pride in a place's mythical-heroic background, but both Plato's and Beckett's foundation myths are used to deceive and control the citizens (though in a much more sinister way in Beckett).

Genesis, through its discussion of the use and manipulation of the myth of Adam and Art, explores the importance of myth in shaping humans' understanding of the world they live in. In this way, it is employed in a similar manner to antiquity's use of myth as *aitia*, that is, explanations of natural phenomena, social institutions or the founding of cities. The interplay of ancient and futuristic myth, furthermore, alludes to contemporary fears of politicians deceiving citizens.

Like *Genesis*, *August's* plot is centred on concepts of ancient philosophy, mostly those of St Augustine, but also Plato. The use of classical names in this novel is less obvious than in *Genesis*, but also of central importance. The name of Tristan's city in *August* is City of

God and his school is called St Augustine's. The teachings of the school are based on St Augustine's philosophy that the best learning is achieved through teaching in vigorous intellectual dialogues (see, Augustine, *Soliloquia* 2.7.14). St Augustine himself was known as an exceptional orator (see Wegenast 1979: 741, 743). Additionally, the name 'Grace' seems to reference Augustine's comments on humans needing divine grace (St Augustine's *De gratia et libero arbitrio* and *De correptione et gratia*). The Latin name 'Tristan' may refer to his sad fate. However, he is shown to be mostly angry, rather than sad.

In Tristan's world (like the Republic of *Genesis*), Plato is the main philosopher, supported by his prophets Jesus and Augustine (2011: 114). This novel may reference two examples of Plato's Theory of Ideas or Forms. As for Grace, she claims that Tristan never loved her – only an idea of her (2011: 119). Towards the end of the novel, Tristan talks about the change that occurred in him when his homeless friend and protector, Annie, died:

'Sometimes you think you understand a thing – you can turn it into words and the words seem to make sense – but then true understanding arrives, and you realize that all you'd ever seen before was the shadow of the idea.

2011: 191

This expands on the discussions of ideas in *Genesis* (2006: 94): there in relation to artificial intelligence versus humans, here in relation to true understanding.

The topic of free will in *Genesis* is developed and becomes the central topic of *August*. Free will is a consistent topic of discussion at Tristan's school and was central to the work of the historical St Augustine, who wrote *On the Free Choice of the Will* (*De libero arbitrio*) and *On Grace and Free Choice* (*De gratia et libero arbitrio*). The school rector in Beckett's novel becomes obsessed with the question of free will and uses Tristan to try to demonstrate that no free will exists. In a battle of wills, Tristan tries to prove him wrong. In the end, it is Grace, who never had the luxury of a formal education, who teaches Tristan that he was tricked by the rector and that he needs to let go of his obsession in order to defeat him.

The question of the soul and of a hierarchy of beings, or even predestination, is discussed in Augustine's work, *On the Gift of Perseverance* (*De Dono Perseverantiae*) and reflected in *August*'s rigid separation of the people of the night from the city's general population. While myth is not explored directly in *August*, the rector presents the idea of free will as a myth. He manipulates Tristan's ability to make his own choices to prove this myth wrong.

Lullaby employs a different kind of Classical Reception than the two earlier novels in the trilogy, despite the similarities of many of *Lullaby*'s themes to those of *Genesis* and *August*. In *Lullaby*, storytelling is not connected with classical mythology,⁸ but with dramatic acting. The topic of theatre plays a central role in the novel, both in a direct way – with Theo's and Rene's involvement in a school production – and indirectly, in Rene trying to play his role to convince Maggie. This theme also surfaces in questions of role-play and identity; each time the twins change roles, they live each other's story.

The plot of *Lullaby* has some similarities to a Greek tragedy, and Rene's role can be compared to that of its typical hero. Rene finally achieves happiness (in his relationship with Emily and his resultant dominance over his twin), but suffers a sort of tragic fall and must face both himself and his guilt. According to Aristotle's *Poetics* (1449b24–28), a tragic hero should evoke pity and fear in the audience when undeserved misfortune befalls him. Rene fits this profile somewhat: by trying to help his brother with the swap, he puts him unwittingly in the situation where he has the accident.⁹ When he tries to help him a second time by undergoing the brain information transfer procedure, he himself is taken away from his old life, against his will. Rene is isolated as the last living member of his family and, while he is generally depicted as morally good, when he gets carried away and uses his superior intelligence to surpass Theo in the drama school admission to win Emily, a chain of tragic events is set in motion. The central drama scenes would have led themselves to allusions to ancient plays on the topic of free will and identity (such as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*); however, there are no direct references to any ancient dramatic or, for that matter, ancient philosophical themes in these scenes.

The names of the two main characters of *Lullaby* have classical etymologies. The injured brother's name, 'Theo', is short for Theodore, meaning 'gift from God', which alludes to Dr Huxley's¹⁰ treatment of Theo as a singular opportunity to further his research, trying to 'play God' with stem cell research. Protesters call the research 'the Immortality Project' and accuse the researchers of attempting to become 'little gods' (2015: 59). The French name, 'Rene', derived from the Latin *renatus*, meaning 're-born', is a reference to Theo getting another chance at life through Rene, even though with a crucial twist; namely, in his second life, he will have his brother's identity, not his own.

Lullaby, like *Genesis* (2006: 42), gives a free rephrasing of Socrates' famous statement about knowing that one knows nothing. It refers to the fashion for teenagers writing quotes on the straps of their shoulder bags. Rene tells Maggie that Theo's strap had: "The only thing we can know is that we do not know, and it is important that we know this." Socrates, I think' (2015: 47).¹¹ The topic of knowledge – or lack thereof – becomes pivotal at the conclusion of the novel, when the twins have been exchanged by the doctors, so that Theo is returned to Rene's old life. However, the doctors do not know of the secret scar that will help each boy know his true identity. Furthermore, Dr Huxley did not know what the outcome of the procedure would be for the twins, so the ancient quotation can be read as alluding to modern teenage nihilism as well as a critique of alleged unethical methods of contemporary scientists, especially in the field of genetics.

Beckett transfers philosophical questions to a young adult science fiction context and presents them in a way that is not just accessible for his readers, but embedded in such gripping stories that readers are immediately drawn in. But this connection of philosophical questions to storytelling is not the only style Beckett employs. In *August* and *Lullaby*, characters tell their own life stories, while *Genesis* focuses on a retelling and critical analysis of the life-story of a historical figure (Adam), during which we learn about the life of the narrator, Anax. In all of these stories, fact and fiction are mixed. This mixing and confusion is a problem explored in *Genesis* because the life of Adam Forde has been manipulated and made into a myth to explain the rise of artificial intelligence

and to support the political structure of the Republic. Characters who tell their own stories are also tempted to manipulate them. For instance, Tristan considers not telling Grace the truth about the car accident in order to prove that there is free will. Likewise, Rene repeatedly worries about how he should best present his life-story to the hospital psychologist, in order to convince her of his mental fitness.

In all three novels, Beckett relies on intertextuality to emphasize his main themes. We see in the trilogy an interplay of classical allusions with modern New Zealand themes. Classical allusions are employed to examine the themes of humanity, identity, sibling relationships, free will, justice, the ideal state, education and medical ethics. The contrast between the classical references and the futuristic settings of the novels helps bring the New Zealand-relevant and general philosophical topics into clear focus. Beckett uses references to the classical past as foils to his contemporary New Zealand allusions, philosophical discussions and reflections on storytelling. In this way, and through the added contrast with the novels' settings in the future, he invites his readers to reflect on their own, present lives.

CHAPTER 12

DISPLACED PERSONS AND DISPLACED NARRATIVES IN S. D. GENTILL'S *HERO TRILOGY*

Anne Rogerson

Sulari Gentill is perhaps best known for her award-winning historical murder mysteries and their gentleman artist-cum-amateur-detective hero, Rowland Sinclair. But while this Sri Lankan-born and Brisbane-raised author was publishing the first of her detective novels set in 1930s New South Wales, she was also writing a three-book fantasy adventure series for young adult readers, the *Hero Trilogy*: *Chasing Odysseus* (2011), *Trying War* (2012) and *The Blood of Wolves* (2013). These novels accompany three brothers – Machaon (Mac), Lycon (Ly), Cadmus (Cad) – and their sister, Hero, on an exciting and perilous journey through the world of classical myth. On the way, they encounter gods, heroes, monsters and Amazons and their story interweaves closely with ancient epic and tragedy, most notably Homer's *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid*.¹ At the same time, the series investigates contemporary Antipodean questions, displaying the intersection with its cultural context now acknowledged as a typical feature of children's literature (Hunt 1994: 37; Lerer 2008: 9), while also manifesting a trend in young adult Australian literature to integrate 'contemporary Australian ways of looking at the world into classical material' (Masson and Hale 2016: 52). Recognizably Australian issues and topics recur throughout, from peoples defined by a fanatical enthusiasm for sport to the way in which bushfires tear through the landscape. The novels' heroes are mates and larrikins; their sister feels deeply about questions of piety and secularism which concern Australian society as they do many western nations; and throughout the three books charting their adventures, Gentill encourages a very Antipodean scepticism towards authority and political leaders. The novels are also interested in the connection of personal identity to a sense of belonging to community, family and country, and in particular to the experiences of outsiders and migrants. These are themes that resonate with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australian populations,² and that preoccupy Australian literature (Mead 2009: 555) and young adult fiction of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (Riverlea 2012; Masson and Hale 2016).

The main characters are four children in exile from the land they call home. All of them had, as babies, been sent away from the home of their birth, leaving them to be brought up by others. Though the motif of the abandoned child is common in children's literature (Nikolajeva 2013: 3211–12), Gentill's heroes struggle throughout the trilogy with consequent feelings of displacement and abandonment that have particular meaning in the novels' early twenty-first-century Australian context. Government-sponsored child

migration schemes after the Second World War and the long-standing and systemic practice of forcible removal from their families of Aboriginal children, now known as the 'Stolen Generations', resulted in over half a million Australian children experiencing institutional care in the twentieth century.³ Increasing and sustained political and public attention to the experiences of these 'forgotten Australians', and particularly to the consequences of the displacement of Aboriginal children, has made their stories a matter of national significance.⁴ Against this background, Gentill's decision to place at the centre of her trilogy characters who in various ways do not belong in the dominant society through which they move, and particularly children who suffer separation from their families and cultures, is poignant and political.

Gentill's books explore the loneliness of displaced persons (and monsters), and the difficulties of their struggles to find and assert their own sense of identity; in doing so, they also displace the narrative tradition within which they work, giving us a subversive, child's-eye view of the literature of the ancient world with which the books engage, using their retelling of traditional narratives to 'focus on quite different aspects of the story' (Fludernik 2009: 3). Their re-imagination of the mythic past is compelling – at least one of her child readers now views Gentill's versions of the *Odyssey* and *Aeneid* as correct and canonical (Lovatt, Lovatt and Lovatt 2018: 279). It is also, like the books' focus on displaced children, reflective of an arguably Australian perspective, demonstrating a determined iconoclasm characteristic of the literature produced by a nation which is 'divided between an anxious sense of being displaced and inferior, and a confidence in being independent and distinctive' (Mead 2009: 549). This chapter focuses on the innovations, omissions and fresh – one might say deviant – perspectives on classical myth offered by Gentill's three novels, in order to uncover the ways in which they speak with an Australian voice to Australian concerns and Antipodean issues.

The quest traced in the trilogy begins as Mac, Ly, Cad and Hero set out to follow the Greek warrior Odysseus on his way home from the Trojan War, determined to make him confess to his role in Troy's fall and clear the name of their adopted father, Agelaus.⁵ In Greek myth, Agelaus was a slave of King Priam, charged with abandoning the infant Paris on Mount Ida outside Troy to prevent the child from bringing about the city's ruin; he rescued the baby after five days of exposure (during which time the boy had been suckled by a bear) and brought Paris up as his own son (Apollodorus, *Library* 3.12.5). In Gentill's story, Agelaus is one of the Herdsmen, inhabitants of Mount Ida who help and protect the Trojans throughout the war but who are vulnerable to characterization by Gentill's 'civilized' Greeks and Trojans as wild and, hence, inferior and untrustworthy. When the city falls, the Herdsmen are falsely accused of treachery and Agelaus is killed on the orders of King Priam's only surviving son, Scamandrios. Odysseus' authoritative historical voice is needed to clear Agelaus' reputation and that of the Herdsmen, motivating the adventures of Agelaus' sons and daughter in *Chasing Odysseus*. The four children follow the hero on his circuitous journey towards Ithaca via the landmarks of his long trip home in the *Odyssey*, observing and often participating in his adventures. Finally, in Phaeacia, with the help of the bard Demodocus and the princess Nausicaa, they trick Odysseus into telling the true story of Troy's betrayal and fall.⁶ At the end of the novel, they have achieved

their objective and they turn their ship back home. When they arrive at the beginning of the second instalment, *Trying War*, however, they find Mount Ida under attack by the Amazons, who take Hero captive, and a new journey begins. Mac, Ly and Cad set out to win their sister back, travelling first to Kolchis, where they encounter Medea, and then on to the land of the Amazons, rescuing Hero before going back to Kolchis and eventually to Athens via the island of Skyros. At the start of the third novel, *The Blood of Wolves*, Hero and her brothers are again back at Troy, but soon leave once more, summoned by the Trojan refugees who need their aid. They are counselled to go by Pan, the god of the Herdsmen and a not-infrequent presence in the transformative tales of children's literature (Hale 2015: 23–8; Bazovsky 2018), who warns them of armies coming to fight over their lands and their herds. This time their travels will follow the path of Aeneas, and through the course of the book they entwine themselves in the events of the *Aeneid*, and its immediate aftermath. The story ends when Iulus becomes king after Aeneas has 'disappeared' by the banks of a river.⁷ Finally, in the third book's epilogue, the twins Romulus and Remus are suckled by a she-wolf with paws made bloody by an arduous journey from the Etruscan hills. It is implied that this protective and self-sacrificing wolf is Lupa, who acts as a mother figure to Machaon, Lycon and Cadmus throughout the three novels. The Antipodean theme of the abandonment of children is thus re-emphasized at the same time as, in closing, the series looks forward to the foundation of Rome and another fraught story of brotherhood and betrayal.

As the summary above shows, the crossing and re-crossing of the seas is constant in the *Hero Trilogy*. Its characters are almost always on the move. Their journeys echo those of many protagonists of children's literature, from Bilbo Baggins to the Pevensies of the Narnia chronicles, who travel in order to find themselves (Lovatt 2016: 411). At the same time, however, the journeys of self-discovery made by Gentill's characters are evocative of the 'walkabout' practices of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia, which are particularly associated with the transition into adulthood also experienced by Hero and her brothers, as well as of the wanderings of the migrants and refugees who have come to Australia over many years, the author's family among them. Significantly, the restlessness of Gentill's characters is not only necessitated by the quests on which they travel, but also innate and – unlike the journeys of many fictional characters – does not come to an end with the end of the novels. This is made clear at the end of the third book, *The Blood of Wolves* when, growing 'restless in the confines of walls', they prepare to leave young King Iulus and the new homeland the Trojans have established in Italy to seek 'their own destiny' (427).⁸ Unlike the Trojans to whom the *Aeneid* promises a new homeland, a new identity and even a new language (*Aen.* 12.834–7), Gentill's Herdsmen are wanderers to the end: 'Their sense of belonging comes from who they are, rather than where they are.'⁹ In this way they reflect in particular aspects of the experience of immigrants to Australia, whose identity rests in culture rather than place.

The fact that they are wanderers is a realization that Gentill's characters gradually grow into, as the novels chart how their yearning for home merges with an acceptance that it is ultimately impossible for them to go back and settle again on Mount Ida. It becomes apparent in the final book that for Gentill's Herdsmen, as for many migrant

communities, an acceptance of the fact that the future lies away from the land that once was home involves significant shifts and an emerging clarity in the way they think about their own identity. In *The Blood of Wolves*, when the Herdsmen are told that they may not remain at Mount Ida, they are uneasy and 'confused': they 'had once been defined by what they were to Troy' (21). While living on Mount Ida, their task was clear: to feed and to help the Trojans in the city beneath the mountain. Once Troy has fallen, the Trojans are all gone, and their land has been redefined from home to battleground, the Herdsmen come to realize that they cannot remain either. They then must face the question of their destiny without the comfort of an obvious answer determined by place and tradition. Their experiences explore and synthesize a displacement paradoxically shared by indigenous and immigrant Antipodean populations, whose land is lost to them and whose home cannot be recovered.

As Gentill's characters face these difficult issues, freedom becomes an increasingly important concept and the independence which the three brothers and Hero have already displayed through the first books grows increasingly essential to the Herdsmen's developing sense of self.¹⁰ These themes are clearly signposted as *The Blood of Wolves* opens. The irreverent attitude of Machaon, Cadmus and Lycon towards the gods, long a source of deep anxiety and frustration to the extremely pious Hero, is connected explicitly to their growing realization of the 'bitter, and dearly bought' freedom associated with Troy's fall (7). This freedom, they realize, had always been theirs, and it is something they argue for again and again in their encounters with the Trojans through the novel. To the renegade Typhos who comes at the beginning of the book to get their help, Machaon insists: "We were your allies, not your servants. We are still not your servants" (14). Their strong sense of independence is endorsed by Pan, who rejects an offer from the Trojan to build him a temple in exchange for the gift of the Herdsmen in the Trojans' time of need: "They go of their own choosing" (23). The Herdsmen find it necessary to reassert their autonomy several times in the face of Trojan assumptions of their right to rule. After a fraught meeting with Aeneas, who appears in *The Blood of Wolves* as a controlling cult-leader, dangerous, conniving and possibly unhinged, they resist his call to merge with the Trojan people, promising instead to "settle nearby for now . . . watch over you and . . . be your allies" (54). The final novel of the trilogy thus allows its readers to explore the frustrations experienced by migrant communities, in Australia and elsewhere, viewed as a servant class and at the same time pressured to assimilate into a new culture.

A further Australian edge gives a cultural and contemporary bite to the definition of the Herdsmen by their refusal to 'dwell within city walls,' which mirrors Pan's earlier statement of indifference to temple walls, and is echoed in the final chapter of the book, where they leave the city established by Aeneas' son, Iulus. The Herdsmen's disinclination to be physically confined resonates strongly in an Australian context, evoking popular conceptions both of Aboriginal peoples and of the stockmen and drovers who travel through the outback of the Australian imagination. For Gentill's characters, this drive to spatial freedom is matched by their reluctance both to submit to overlordship and to accept it within their community. Following a tradition in Australian children's literature which goes back at least as far as Mary Grant Bruce's Billabong books, Gentill's connection

of her characters' attachment to freedom within the landscape to personal independence allows them to function at the same time as imaginary figures in a revisionist version of the classical world in which the social freedoms of women, for example, are also respected.¹¹ Gentill's female protagonist Hero fights for her rights throughout the series. Machaon makes clear to his future wife, Nausicaa, that marrying him is her free choice: "the Herdsmen of Ida do not own their women" (*The Blood of Wolves*, 281).

Such personal freedom carries the burden of personal responsibility, as Gentill also makes clear when Machaon rejects a proposal from Dido to serve her as her champion and lead the combined armies of Carthage and Troy, taking the place of the Carthaginian warrior Ceryus whom he had killed. Again, in this scene personal and political freedom go hand in hand, as the Herdsmen refuse Aeneas' claim that they "owe [him] obedience" and reassert their status as "allies, not . . . subjects" (*The Blood of Wolves*, 289).¹² The Herdsmen's fierce defence of their independence from the colonizing Trojans, who believe that old relationships freely entered into have removed their right to self-determination, resonates with long-standing preoccupations in Australian literary culture (Bode 2012: 57–104) and with the Australian psyche,¹³ while also bearing a further didactic message for Gentill's young adult audience.

The themes that run through Gentill's novels speak to a variety of the concerns of a migrant and colonizing nation entering the twenty-first century with a renewed focus on the personal costs of displacement and disempowerment paid by many of its citizens, past and present. At the same time, the Australian and particularly the migrant outlook that Gentill brings to her retelling of classical myth allows her to engage with questions of power at a textual level, opening up the world of ancient epic to new understandings as the authoritative narratives of the northern hemisphere are seen from the perspective of children and underdogs whose wanderings wind through the teleological epics at the heart of the western tradition.

The belief that there are different points of view from those expressed by the powers-that-be is one that recurs throughout the *Hero Trilogy*. This is seen in the way Gentill's heroes become aware of the failures and deceits of the authority figures and heroes of ancient epic, and in how her narrative itself relates to the ancient literature whose stories she retells for a young Australian audience. The discussion of the first novel on Gentill's website states that: '*Chasing Odysseus* weaves into the *Odyssey* – it does not contradict Homer but provides another story within the Greek epic.'¹⁴ This delicate and careful assertion of the subversive authority of her books, which tell the alternative stories of characters invisible, voiceless or given little chance to speak in classical literature, was reiterated in the press release that accompanied the novel:

In the novel it becomes very important to the Herdsmen that their story be told. I think that's also true today . . . every nation, people and community has a story. How it's told determines its place in history.¹⁵

The quest that dominates the first novel in the series allows Gentill to explore her theme of how stories belonging to those on the other side of the wall weave into historical

narratives. Throughout *Chasing Odysseus*, Hero and her brothers strive to contradict Scamandrios' claim that the Herdsmen were traitors and for the true story – their community's story – to be told. Eventually, the truth is revealed when a lie that Odysseus cannot tolerate is presented. The bard Demodocus sings another, alternative version of how Troy fell, giving Menelaus the starring role as 'the most noble-witted of the Greek generals' (345). In Gentill's narrative it is the insult offered by this false tale that drives Odysseus to identify himself to Alcinous and the Phaeacians, and to stress repeatedly that Troy's fall was to his credit alone: "I was the strategist . . . I devised the cunning stratagem" (349–51).¹⁶ Odysseus' revelations also involve the erasure of the Herdsmen ("little more than savages") from the popular story of Troy's fall: "They were destroyed along with their Trojan masters" (352). Though Gentill's Herdsmen are written out of history here, their honour is satisfied when Odysseus takes the credit for Troy's fall, implicitly absolving their father; and their independence is such that they do not care about being dismissed by the self-aggrandizing Greek hero.¹⁷ The *Hero Trilogy* tells their story, and they and their friends know the truth: they will continue to tell it among themselves, even if it remains unspoken in the 'historical' classical tradition, their voices a counterpoint to Homer and Virgil's epic song.¹⁸

The Hero Trilogy does not, however, simply give voice to the voiceless characters of epic, filling in its lacunae and exploring obscure side-paths to the mythical stories with which Gentill's novels engage. The marginalized Herdsmen contribute in a variety of important and unrecognized ways to the dominant narratives of ancient Greece and Rome, and particularly to the direction taken by the plots of the *Odyssey* and *Aeneid*, in effect rewriting these canonical works as Antipodean texts. Lycon, the youngest of the brothers, is also an artist with a graffiti habit and a strong tendency to the irony 'often said to be a defining characteristic of Australian writing' (Bird 2006: 191). He leaves the message 'keep your spirits up' carved in the bark of a willow tree at the Gates of Hades (*Chasing Odysseus*, 244), and paints vivid pictures of men and beasts on the walls of Agelaus' cave (*Chasing Odysseus*, 22), continuing a long tradition among the Herdsmen of visual storytelling.¹⁹ Book I of *Chasing Odysseus* opens with an acknowledgement of his interest in stories and sensitivity, mirroring that of the author, to the power and potential of narrative.²⁰ There is also an unexpected revelation that Lycon composed perhaps the most famous phrase used in the telling of the tale of the Greeks and Trojans:

The wall loomed above him, ancient, impenetrable. . . .

He worked quickly, making his marks with the purple pigment he'd taken from his father's supplies. . . .

A forearm locked about his neck. Lycon wrestled free and turned to face his brothers.

Machaon was shaking his head. Cadmus was staring at the words on the wall. . . .

Machaon read the words, barely discernible in the darkness. Huge letters in royal purple: 'Helen of Troy'.

He smiled. 'I guess that gets to the heart of the matter.'

Chasing Odysseus, 7–8

In a scene reminiscent of the 'Romans go home' moment in Monty Python's *Life of Brian* (1979), Gentill's young hero opens the trilogy by giving to Helen the epithet that has come to define her in the western tradition. Machaon's laughing comment is a hint to the reader of the way in which the larrikin Lycon has shaped millennia of literary culture: "Helen of Troy . . . it may catch on" (*Chasing Odysseus*, 9).

Throughout the three novels, the brothers continue subtly shaping the course of epic history, with a particular concern for those – often women and children – who suffer the overbearing march of heroic narratives. In *Chasing Odysseus*, for example, it is Lycon and Hero who bring help to the people of Ismarus in the land of the Cicones after Odysseus and his men have sacked the city, killed the men and shared out the women and riches as plunder between them. Gentill's narrative offers a perhaps more credible explanation of the arrival of the Cicones from nearby to rescue their compatriots than that given by Homer's Odysseus, who says that the (dead or enslaved) inhabitants of Ismarus had managed to raise the alarm (*Od.* 9.47). She simultaneously deploys Machaon and Cadmus to distract the Greeks from harming the captive women by enticing them to compete in impromptu games, thus highlighting the dark realities of ancient epic for its victims while also filling in time that Homer's Odysseus glosses over (*Chasing Odysseus*, Book VII).²¹ Later, it is Machaon – not Hermes – whom Odysseus meets on his way to Circe's palace, and Machaon who intervenes in Circe's attempt to drug the Greek hero;²² Gentill's Odysseus is also befuddled by drink throughout this episode, and it is his inebriated state which causes him to mistake the young Herdsman for a god (*Chasing Odysseus*, 215–19).²³ And Machaon again sets the Homeric narrative back on course when it appears to have stalled on the island of Ogygia in Book XXII. The Herdsmen and their sister meet Calypso weeping and desolate on the shore of her island because her unwelcome guest Odysseus will not go away. They advise her to inform Odysseus that Hermes has visited her and told her that she must let the Ithacan hero go home, allowing both for the hero's arrival among the Phaeacians and for the revelation of the truth of how Troy fell (*Chasing Odysseus*, 301–3).²⁴ Gentill's migrant heroes, with their practical and sensitive Antipodean outlook, thus consistently direct the plot of the ancient epics while also looking out for its casualties, as they themselves transform from silent and unsung victims to powerful actors in the retold story.

The adventures in which Machaon, Cadmus, Lycon and Hero become embroiled not only explain and propel the workings and narrative trajectory of classic works of ancient literature, but also help to shape the physical and mythical landscape of ancient Greece. It is thanks to Hero's intervention that the hideous Erinyes, divine manifestations of vengeance and fury who persecute Machaon for much of the second novel, become gentle, transformed by Athena into the 'Eumenides, the kindly ones', and a new era of law, 'of judgement . . . of men by men', and of reason begins in the Greek world (*Trying War*, 367–8).²⁵ Immediately after this, the landscape starts to shift and the mountainous hills that Gentill had placed behind Athens begin 'to sink', morphing into a more recognizable

landscape (*Trying War*, 368). When the earthquake is over, Hero and her brothers see the Areopagus as it appears today, a prominent rocky outcrop northwest of Athens (*Trying War*, 374). The adventures of Gentill's young heroes thus become paradoxically authoritative. Though they themselves do not feature in the stories that have come to us from the classical past, the modern Australian author has created characters who interact with the named actors in the myths of Greece, Troy and Rome and who are central to the development of their ancient narratives and to that of the societies and landscapes in which they were told. Her stories intertwine with those that have come down to us from Homer, Virgil and others, and take upon themselves no small weight as they help to put the pieces of the past into place and allow us to look at it – and the present – with fresh, antipodean eyes.

Both humorously iconoclastic and morally serious, Gentill's young adult novels also reveal the failings of the epic heroes whom her characters encounter, writing the 'struggle between authority and the spirit of rebellion' characteristic of Australian society (Masson and Hale 2016: 48) into the fabric of their narrative and at the same time winning readers' sympathies to the rebellious, wandering siblings whose point of view Gentill allows us to share. The perspective of underdogs and outsiders not only opens up the possibility of rebellion but also allows us to see myth differently (Makins 2014). So Gentill can rewrite Odysseus, as we have already seen, as a drunkard and a braggart, who bores the hapless Calypso literally to tears. As the Herdsmen witness his adventures, he comes across variously as pompous, spiteful, deceitful and a bad leader.²⁶ When he prepares to sail past the Sirens, he and his warriors are made to look ridiculous as a running critique is offered by the three brothers, who display a characteristically antipodean disrespect for self-importance, impracticality and displays of excessive emotion (*Chasing Odysseus*, 260–1).

Theseus on Skyros is also later revealed as untrustworthy and manipulative. He is a bad guest and – like Odysseus – inclined to overstate his own heroic achievements.²⁷ He is also a danger to young girls, as is Virgil's hero Aeneas, a disturbed and jealous individual who cannot be trusted and who exercises a frightening charismatic power over his fanatical and brainwashed Trojan followers (e.g. *The Blood of Wolves*, 51–3). In Gentill's story, Aeneas deliberately starts the war that erupts between the Trojans and Italians in the second half of the *Aeneid* (*The Blood of Wolves*, 390), and it is strongly implied that he murdered Dido in Carthage (*The Blood of Wolves*, 326–7).²⁸ He insists obsessively upon being called 'Son of the Goddess' and makes grandiose claims of visitations by the gods. He appears to invent the story of his trip to the underworld and, unlike the Herdsmen's encounters with the god Pan or the ghosts of Hades in *Chasing Odysseus*, his otherworldly adventures are supported nowhere in Gentill's narrative, instead being presented as the dubious fantasies of a narcissist, who childishly claims 'his face red, his eyes bulging' that the shades "'held a big parade in my honour'" (*The Blood of Wolves*, 355).²⁹ In the *Aeneid* the Parade of Heroes is a sombre and inspiring educational experience for a noble if at times problematic hero (6.752–892). In *The Blood of Wolves*, however, Aeneas' famous piety becomes a sham and a delusion. Gentill presents the hero as possibly deranged and his venerable father Anchises similarly as a senile old man, cackling in delight at the story he tells repeatedly of his sexual success with Venus.³⁰

The Blood of Wolves marks the culmination of a trend throughout the trilogy to question the heroism and the stature of the characters of ancient epic and tragedy. It is against the backdrop of this challenge to personal and narrative authority that Gentill's young heroes discover who they are and, through this discovery, come to terms with the complicated nature of their own belonging. They learn that a strong sense of family and belonging is the product of mutual care and respect, rather than blood ties,³¹ race or a fixed homeland. Physical shortcomings need not result in rejection: Hero's bad eyesight caused the Amazons to cast her out, but to her father Agelaus she is beautiful; Machaon is changed by Medea's magical meddling in ways that make many think him terrifying and unhuman, but his siblings and Nausicaa love him and accept his difference. The series traces the growing tolerance of its heroes,³² and stresses the importance of care and understanding for those who have suffered trauma as well as of the protection of those who cannot protect themselves.³³ In Australia, a nation defined by immigration and by the impact of colonization upon its indigenous populations, where the question of the world's refugee population is a current and pressing issue frequently at stake in our children's literature (Bradford 2009: 295–6), the trajectory of Gentill's young heroes thoughtfully engages young readers with contemporary concerns. Her heroes and heroines are at times logical and pragmatic and at others – like the heroes of ancient epic – are driven by emotions they cannot control. Their encounters with those ancient heroes sharpen their sense of identity and help them to learn at least part of the answer to the question that grips people of all times and all nations: what makes for a good life? The answers in *The Hero Trilogy* are both universal and antipodean in their focus: do your job, protect your family, allow people to be free, and do not seek happiness in earthly glory.³⁴ Antipodean and migrant perspectives allow old stories to speak to our problems, as Gentill's Australian authorial perspective takes displaced characters and empowers them, making them central to a narrative which displaces and destabilizes the authority of classical epic and – in doing so – offers a human and compassionate answer to what it might mean to belong to and be a good citizen of a complex and unsettling world.

PART V

AUSTRALASIA, GREECE AND ROME – PAPER AND CANVAS

CHAPTER 13

PAINTING ANZACS IN AN EPIC LANDSCAPE: GREEK MYTH, THE TROJAN WAR AND SIDNEY NOLAN'S *GALLIPOLI SERIES*

Sarah Midford

The Great War had a huge impact on the recently federated Australian nation, which eagerly sent large numbers of volunteer soldiers to fight the European war. Nearly 40 per cent of the male population aged between eighteen and forty-four years old enlisted, and although many returned to Australia they did so physically and psychologically wounded. Of particular significance to the Australian people was the Allied landing at Gallipoli in Western Turkey. On the 25 April 1915, soldiers from the Australian Imperial Force and the New Zealand Expeditionary Force landed on the Gallipoli peninsula independently of British forces. They would remain on the peninsula locked in a stalemate for the following nine months battling extreme temperatures, disease and dehydration. Almost immediately after its occurrence, the landing was lauded as the greatest moment in Australia's short history and the birth of the Australian nation. The soldiers of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps quickly came to be known as 'ANZACS' and the myths built around their deeds, the Anzac legend. Since the Gallipoli landing, the historic landscape of the Dardanelles has come to occupy the collective Australian imagination as a place of national significance and the Anzac narrative has proliferated in art and literature.

In 1955 the Australian artist Sidney Nolan (1917–92) began painting what would later be called the *Gallipoli Series*. In this series Nolan sought to understand the significance of Australia's Great War tragedy by exploring the universality of war experience in myth and history. He went about this by painting Anzac soldiers in the epic landscape of the Dardanelles and by challenging classically beautiful representations of death through both a personal and a Homeric lens. Throughout his *Gallipoli Series*, Nolan makes visual references to iconic myths and artworks in his representation of Australia's most recognizable military endeavour. Doing so enabled Nolan to incorporate the Gallipoli campaign into a continuous narrative of tragedy and bloodshed stretching back into antiquity. Nolan also painted his own experiences of war in an attempt to reconcile his personal feelings of loss and understand them in a greater human context. By painting mythical, historical and personal stories onto the same canvas, Nolan combines national and individual experiences of war to reimagine the Anzac narrative as a universal story of human tragedy that recalls those from the past.

Representations of the Anzac experience at Gallipoli are expressed differently in Australia and New Zealand, so it is important to look at each nation separately (see, Mein

Smith and Hempenstall 2003: 1–5). This chapter focuses on Australian uses of the classics in Great War representation, but acknowledges that this often overlaps with New Zealand representations (Midford et al. 2016: 30–2). Classical Reception in Australia's Anzac narrative before Nolan's *Gallipoli Series* predominantly glorified the military prowess of Australian soldiers, or elevated the Gallipoli campaign to the status of Homeric epic (Gerster 1987: 10; Midford 2011: 70–1; Midford 2010: 6–7). British Great War commemorative efforts drawing on Homeric epic similarly equated contemporary soldiers with ancient warrior heroes (Vandiver 2010: 245–8), although it was more common to employ the classics in negative representations of war than in an Australian context. Wilfred Owen's 'great lie', that it was 'sweet and fitting to die for one's country', subverted the line in Horace's poem promoting Roman military prowess (*Odes* III.2.13). Owen's use of the Classics was closer to that of Nolan in his *Gallipoli Series*. Nolan draws on Homer's *Iliad* to articulate that the glory of the Gallipoli campaign was, indeed, a great lie, highlighting the tragic consequences of war, not glorifying it, or equating the warrior-like natures of ancient and modern soldiers. This negative use of the classics in Australian representations of the Great War was rare, but the extent to which Nolan represented the gruesome consequences of war in his paintings was unique. The exploration of Nolan's employment of the Classics in the *Gallipoli Series*, then, contributes another dimension to the field of Great War Classical Receptions in Australia and identifies how the classics could be drawn upon in Australia in a post-Second World War context.

The Trojan War, 1915

In 1955 Nolan moved to the Greek island of Hydra to live with his friend, Australian writer George Johnston. There, Nolan started reading about Greek myth and became preoccupied with a desire to paint the Trojan War. He had no formalized education in the Classics, and everything he knew about Greek myth and the Trojan War was attained through reading and conversations with friends like Johnston. Nolan read Robert Graves' *The Greek Myths*, newly published in 1955. He was also in contact with Alan Moorehead who was writing his book *Gallipoli* (1956) on the nearby island of Spetsae. In advance of his book's release, Moorehead published an article in the *New Yorker*, 'Our Far-Flung Correspondents: Return to a Legend', which contained several parallels between the Gallipoli campaign and the Trojan War narrative, conflating the Anzacs with Achilles and other warriors from the Trojan War, and presenting the two conflicts as part of a continuous history of the landscape (see also, Moyal 2005: 55; Page 1978: 5; Adams 1987: 133). In the article, printed on 2 April 1955, Moorehead (109–10) states:

Here, at least, there has been no gap in history but a strong feeling of continuity; very little one sees, in the way of courage or destiny, divides Achilles of the great war cry and the other soldiers at the siege of Troy from the generation in khaki that arrived only forty years ago; here both, equally dead, become identified with the present.

Nolan read Johnston's copy of this article and it strongly influenced his conception of the Gallipoli landscape as a place where histories could intersect upon heroic acts separated by time (Adams 1987: 133). Reading 'Return to a Legend' led Nolan to see the Anzac soldiers as 'reincarnations of the ancient Trojan heroes of mythical times' (Nolan quoted in Wilkins and Webster 2009: 5). This conception of Anzacs as reincarnated ancient warriors was well-established in the Australian Anzac narrative, and the connection was commonly viewed as positive, inspiring pride in Australia's Great War effort.

Further influences on Nolan's understanding of the Gallipoli campaign while he was living in Greece included Compton Mackenzie. Mackenzie served with British Intelligence at Gallipoli and wrote extensively about the connections between ancient warrior heroes and the Anzac soldiers at Gallipoli. In 1929, he published his recollections of the Gallipoli campaign, *Gallipoli Memories*.¹ In it, Mackenzie (1929: 80) proclaimed that the beauty of the Anzacs was 'heroic' and 'should have been celebrated in hexameters not headlines'. The celebration of Anzac soldiers as epic heroes is further demonstrated in Mackenzie's suggestion that their image be painted on vases alongside Trojan heroes (Mackenzie 1929: 80). Writing about his time on the Gallipoli peninsula, Mackenzie (1929: 80–1) recalls: 'There was not one of those glorious men I saw that day who might not himself have been Ajax or Diomed, Hector or Achilles.'

The connections Nolan was exposed to while in Greece led to memories from his childhood resurfacing. When interviewed about the *Gallipoli Series* in 1978, Nolan recalled reading the poem 'The Trojan War, 1915' as a boy. This poem was included in *The Anzac Book* (Bean 1916), which was a compilation of poems, drawings and stories written by Anzac soldiers while in the Gallipoli trenches. Copies of the book were widely available in Australia during Nolan's childhood, with 100,000 copies sold in 1916 alone and more than 140,000 copies sold in total (Kent 1985: 8).² Nolan felt that Adams' poem succinctly summed up the connection between the Gallipoli campaign and the Trojan War; the poem thereby adding to Nolan's understanding of the campaign as a re-enactment of the famous war (Page 1978: 8).

'The Trojan War, 1915' – Arthur Adams³

We care not what old Homer tells
Of Trojan War and Helen's fame
Upon the ancient Dardanelles
New peoples write – in blood – their name.

Those Grecian heroes long have fled,
No more the Plain of Troy they haunt;
Made sacred by our Southern dead
Historic is the Hellespont.
Homeric Wars are fought again
By men who like old Greeks can die;

Antipodean Antiquities

Australian backblock heroes slain,
With Hector and Achilles lie.

No legend lured these men to roam;
They journeyed forth to save from harm
Some Mother-Helen sad at home,
Some obscure Helen on a farm.

And when one falls upon the hill –
Then by dark Styx's gloomy strand,
In honour to plain Private Bill
Great Agamemnon lifts his hand!

In this poem Adams superimposes the Gallipoli campaign onto the same landscape as the Trojan War. Bernard Smith (1967: 78) draws attention to Nolan doing the same in his *Gallipoli Series*. The poem recognizes the legacy of the Trojan War, but reconsecrates the ground with Anzac blood. For this act of bloodletting, Agamemnon lifts his hand to those who have written their name, not only into the landscape of the Dardanelles, but also into the sacred legends of the region. Agamemnon's gesture acknowledges the Anzac soldier as an equal, and Nolan was inspired by the thought of 'the great act of the man who lifts his hand in honour of plain Private Bill' (Page 1978: 9). Influenced by his childhood memories, the writings of Mackenzie, Moorehead and Graves, as well as his long conversations on the topic with Johnston, Nolan rethought his original desire to paint the Trojan War and commenced his twenty-year-long venture of painting the *Gallipoli Series*, which combined the Trojan War and Anzac narratives in a single landscape. However, rather than reincarnate Trojan warriors in Australian slouch hats, Nolan looked to the deeper experiences of pain, suffering and loss that connected the experiences of ancient and modern soldiers fighting in the same landscape.

To contextualize his thoughts, in 1956 Nolan visited the Gallipoli peninsula. At Gallipoli Nolan 'stood in the place where the first Anzacs had stood' and 'looked across the straits to the site of ancient Troy and felt that, here, history had stood still' ('The Anzac Story' 1965: 3). From this time on, the Trojan War and the Anzac legend were bound together in Nolan's mind. According to Johnston, after the artist's return from Gallipoli, Nolan's poetic imagination saw the Australian and Greek narratives as a single myth: 'I suppose it was natural enough that, in excited discussions that would go on half the night in the waterfront taverns, Troy and Anzac became all mixed up together. (After all, it is practically only a biscuit's toss from the plain of Troy to the city of Anzac)' (Johnston 1965: 14).⁴

The act of walking the heights of Gallipoli had fortified the connection between the twentieth-century conflict and the Trojan War in Nolan's mind. Temporal links are forged through interaction with a mythical landscape. In the Aegean region, human geographer, Veronica della Dora (2008: 219) contends that 'links between the present and the classical past [are] activated through the physical act of climbing'. When Nolan

climbed the heights of Chunuk Bair (briefly held by the Anzac soldiers in 1915), his experience was connected to the men who had fought so hard for this territory. The experience also connected him to the experiences of those who fought the mythical Trojan War across the clearly visible Dardanelles three millennia earlier. The connection between Troy and Gallipoli is reiterated by the artist again and again because, displaced from each chronological context, these two conflicts reveal, for Nolan, the universality of war experience (Johnston 1967: 466).

Painting an epic landscape

In his *Gallipoli Series*, Nolan erodes the physical distance between Australia and the Dardanelles by rendering the Gallipoli and Australian outback landscapes as indistinguishable. This is discernible when comparing Nolan's 'Gallipoli Landscape' (c. 1960) with 'Ned Kelly in a Landscape' (1964).⁵ In both paintings, the scrub is represented in the same brown tones and each painting is separated into sky, water and land, dividing the canvas into similar horizontal proportions. Another comparison can be made between 'Central Australia' (1950) and 'Drowned Soldier as Icarus' (1958). Although the two rocky landscapes do not share the same colour palette, the ridges of the cliffs are emphasized in the same manner, uniting the distant landscapes on each canvas.

Nolan acknowledged that he 'more or less painted [Gallipoli scenes] ... as I paint the bush' (Page 1978: 16). The elision of these two landscapes results in a third, imaginary space created by the artist. Pierre Nora (1996: 15, 18) discusses landscapes that evoke a sense of continuity between the past and the present. He calls these 'topographical memory places'. Topographical memory places must connect: the temporal and the eternal; the collective and the individual; the prosaic and the sacred. Nolan's Gallipoli landscapes are 'topographical memory places' because they connect the physical places of Australia and the Dardanelles across time, bringing together the myth and history of people born thousands of years apart. The past and the present can coexist in this imaginary space because, as Gilles Deleuze (1966: 59) explains: '... the past and the present do not denote two successive moments, but two elements which coexist: one is the present, which does not cease to pass, and the other is the past, which does not cease to be.'

In Nolan's complex landscape layered with memory, myth and history, all past events that occurred in the region could coincide. As Nolan (in Barber 1964: 97) said of the Anzacs who fought at Gallipoli:

All these people, all these heroes, yes they all exist, but in a kind of dream, larger than life, almost unreal, in the way that Achilles and Hector exist for us. We still use them as symbols for our dilemmas ... So it seems to me that I must throw it back as much as possible, and treat it as a myth or story that belongs to all the history of Australia – and becomes a symbol of what Australia has done and can do, despite her rather grim beginnings.

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Nolan's paintings visually compress time and space in the same way that Adams, Mackenzie and Moorehead populate the same literary landscape with both Anzac soldiers and the heroes of Troy. Nolan's ability to create imaginary landscapes was recognized by Rudiger Joppien, a historian who visited Australia from Cologne in 1976. In a lecture delivered at Exeter University later that year, Joppien (1978: 60) commented on 'Nolan's transformation of local legend into a myth of universal meaning'. Myths provide insight into modern scenarios because they are familiar, flexible and representational (Griffin 1986: 14–17). By drawing on the recognizable mythologies from the Dardanelles landscape, Nolan was connecting the Australian experience of war with that of earlier societies to better understand the place of war in human nature (Page 1978: 10). The artist's desire to understand the complexity of war through Classical Reception differentiates his paintings from more traditional uses of the Classics in representations of the Great War, including those produced by Moorehead and Mackenzie.

'Gallipoli'

The painting that best demonstrates Nolan's ability to create topographical memory spaces is the diptych 'Gallipoli', painted in 1963. This painting represents the past and



Figure 13.1a Sidney Nolan. 'Gallipoli', 1963. Australian War Memorial ART19581.01 and ART19581.02.

present in the same moment and in the same landscape. Well-known artistic representations of mythological and historical narratives as well as portraits of the artist's own family are incorporated into the work, and the result is an imaginary space of layered memory that reveals both the personal and universal tragedy of war. Although the painting is not exclusively classical in its artistic references, each image drawn upon from earlier works features classically rendered figures that represent the horrific consequences of war and/or the tragedy of premature death.

The mass of figures in 'Gallipoli' makes visual reference to an early sixteenth-century cartoon by Michelangelo, 'Battle of Cascina' (1504–5), which depicts a historical battle fought between the Florentines and Pisans on 28 July 1364. Michelangelo's scene depicts the moment when the Florentine soldiers, bathing in the Arno River, were taken by surprise by the Pisans. This writhing mass of beautifully rendered classical nudes is replicated in Nolan's 'Gallipoli'. The position and posture of the central figure in Nolan's first panel makes a visual reference to the figure in the central foreground of Michelangelo's cartoon. There are also historical connections between the Battle of Cascina and the Gallipoli campaign. Although the Pisans initially had the upper hand, they lost the battle, suffering at least 2,000 fatalities and losing about the same number again as prisoners of war to the Florentines. Similarly, the Anzac landing took Turkish forces by surprise. However, on that first day the Anzac soldiers gained as much territory



Figure 13.1b Sidney Nolan. 'Gallipoli', 1963. Australian War Memorial ART19581.01 and ART19581.02.

as they ever would during the campaign before the Allied forces retreated from the peninsula in December 1915, conceding defeat to the stronger Turkish and Ottoman forces.

Also evident in Nolan's 'Gallipoli' is the Hellenistic sculpture, 'Laocoön and His Sons', which depicts the Trojan priest Laocoön as serpents kill him and his sons. The serpents were sent as divine retribution after Laocoön warned the Trojans – in vain – not to accept the Trojan Horse. Nolan includes a visual link to this statue in 'Gallipoli' to signify the grief of a father who could not save his sons and the tragedy of inevitable failure. The sadness of loss and unavoidable disaster relates to the Anzac campaign, which eventually ended in retreat. Nolan also alludes to Laocoön's role as a parent by likening the priest to his own father, who also lost a son because of war. Nolan's brother Raymond drowned off the coast of Cooktown in far north Queensland in 1945. Raymond had spent the previous three years serving in the Pacific during the Second World War and was waiting to be demobilized from the army in time to return to Australia for his twenty-first birthday. Nolan described his brother's death as 'very tragic' and said of his father's distress over Raymond's passing: 'he couldn't quite work out why his son had survived in a war zone and then as a civilian, on the eve of his return home, should be drowned' (Page 1978: 4). Nolan identified the dark figure looming behind the portrait of Raymond (in the bottom left-hand corner of the left-hand panel) as his father attempting to rescue his drowning brother. Both Laocoön and Nolan's father are positioned in the same place on each panel to emphasize the universal nature of the grief they both felt across time and space. However, just as Laocoön was unable to save his sons from their untimely deaths, Nolan's father could not rescue his youngest son and, like Laocoön frozen in marble, would forever wrestle with the torment caused by his loss. In 'Gallipoli', Nolan draws on the past to personalize the death of his brother, rather than romanticize it. Unlike earlier uses of the classics in Australian representations of the Great War, Nolan draws on the past to present the grisly reality of war and not a serene and idealized representation of it.

Nolan contemplated the tragedy of his brother's death and the ongoing distress that grief caused his father and represented this personal loss throughout the *Gallipoli Series* (Page 1978: 4). Raymond's portrait in 'Gallipoli' recalls countless other portraits of Anzac soldiers that make up the majority of the *Gallipoli Series*, including: 'Gallipoli Head' (1958); 'Kenneth' (1958); 'Young Soldier' (1977); and 'Head of a Gallipoli Soldier in Pink, Green and Blue Wearing a Hat' (1978). Nolan said of his fascination with painting the faces of Gallipoli veterans: '[i]t's something to do with my brother . . . dying so young . . . I'm trying to get an innocent look into the face [of the soldiers]' (in Clark 1987: 130). Like Raymond's portrait, the portraits of other Anzac soldiers are painted front on; the soldiers wear their distinctive Australian slouch hat and although their faces are rendered using different colours, textures and media, and are executed in different styles to convey different meanings, each soldier's face is the focal point of the painting. The faces of these soldiers reflect the experiences of the men they represent, and each of them is an attempt to better understand the individual impact war has on those who experience it.

Nolan, however, was not exclusively interested in the soldiers' experience. Because of the impact his brother's death had on him and his family, Nolan was also preoccupied with the way war impacted communities and families. As Nolan said of the repercussions of war: '[t]hat is part of the mystery, and I suppose the sadness of it all is that one doesn't know the cost' (Page 1978: 4). When Raymond Nolan died, his death impacted on the lives of all his loved ones and the artist saw this as the true consequence of war. Watching his family struggle prompted Nolan to translate what was a very personal experience into the greater expression of loss experienced by the Australian people:

Years later when I began to feel interested in the whole concept of war and its relation to Australia, I began to think about it and its effect on my father because . . . wars have a multiple effect. It is not only that the soldier gets knocked over and he's wounded or dead, or knocks over another soldier on the other side and the battle's decided, but the thing spreads out into families with infinite repercussions.

Page 1978: 4

The tragic loss of a son is further emphasized in the background of the 'Gallipoli' diptych. In the central background of both panels are two inverted figures amid a mass of bodies. This visual parallel recalls Icarus falling to his death after flying too close to the sun. Robert Graves tells the tale of Icarus in *The Greek Myths*, and Nolan had been painting Icarus in different contexts at least since 1940, when he designed and painted the set of the Ballet Russe production of 'Icare' on its Australian tour. According to the myth, Icarus perished escaping King Minos and the labyrinth in Crete. His father Daedalus, an inventor, crafted wings for himself and his son from feathers, string and wax. He sternly instructed Icarus to follow his path and not fly too high or too low in order to preserve his wings. Icarus, however, did not heed the warning, and as he soared to greater heights, the sun softened the wax holding his wings together. Icarus' enthusiasm and his life were both extinguished as he fell into the sea and drowned. The general enthusiasm the Anzacs demonstrated by eagerly enlisting in the War recalled the story of Icarus in Nolan's mind and was depicted in the painting 'Drowned Soldier at Anzac as Icarus' (1958), which illustrates the consequences of the Anzacs' enthusiasm. Icarus' drowning also links the myth to Raymond Nolan's death.

The theme of drowning extends beyond images of Icarus and is the subject of numerous paintings in the *Gallipoli Series*, including 'Drowned Gallipoli Soldier' (1958) and 'Dead Soldier in the Shallows' (1958). Another, 'Gallipoli Landscape with recumbent Greek figure' (Figure 13.2), depicts a classical Greek statue floating in the blue waters of the Aegean. Nolan's title is a reference to the Australian artist George Lambert's Great War commemorative sculpture 'Recumbent Figure' (1930), commissioned for St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney. The reference to Lambert's work draws a parallel between classical sculptures and commemorative representations of Anzac soldiers rendered as beautiful and peaceful in death. Lambert's statue had been described by the Australian artist, Arthur Streeton, as having been executed with 'the clear, cold beauty one sees in the figures of the Parthenon frieze' (see Gray 1993: 19). The peaceful representation of death



Figure 13.2 Sidney Nolan. 'Gallipoli Landscape with recumbent Greek figure', c. 1956. Australian War Memorial ART91226.

that drew on classical artistic precedent was common in the post-war period and Jay Winter (1995: 233) has suggested that the use of classical motifs in memorials was designed to minimize the trauma of war.⁶

In Nolan's painting the classical sculpture recalls the stance of the Apollo Belvedere, which depicts the god having just fired an arrow in defence of his mother Leto; this arrow would kill Python, the serpent that guarded Delphi (Graves 1955: 17). A son's defence of his mother recalls the Anzac's defence of their Australian 'Helens' in Adams' 'The Trojan War, 1915'. Apollo is also renowned for his youth and beauty, something commonly noted about the Anzac soldiers serving at Gallipoli and evident in Mackenzie's

Gallipoli Memories. Nolan's drowning of the iconic statue is designed to disorient the viewer and force them to reconsider the beauty of the male form in its new context – drowned off the coast of the Gallipoli peninsula. The manipulation of this beautifully rendered classical form distorts the meaning of a well-known ancient Greek sculpture. Rendered in the same tones as the landscape, this figure both belongs to the earth and is separated from it; surrounded by water it is disconnected from the landscape to which it once belonged. The painting's title is a further distortion of the familiar; although the figure may be 'recumbent', the reorientation of the perspective props up the drowned youth for display. In this painting Nolan forces the viewer to reassess what they are seeing and makes the point that idealized artistic representations that glorify war should be looked at from a different perspective. By recalling Lambert's peacefully sleeping Great War soldier, Nolan draws attention to the inaccuracy of the serene artistic portrayal of those who died in battle.

Nolan had not personally experienced the grand version of war traditionally promoted in classical and classicizing art and, because of this, wanted to express the human consequences of conflict so he could better understand the meaning of his brother's death. Apollo's youth and beauty are retained, as is the traditional contrapposto stance. However, the lost limbs of the sculpture in Nolan's painting, a familiar sight in the context of Greek statuary, become grotesque when they imply missing human limbs as a result of conflict. In myth, most heroes do not suffer the long-term trauma of physical injury – they are killed decisively on the battlefield. However, not all Anzac soldiers died in battle, and many were maimed or traumatized and spent the rest of their lives attempting to reintegrate into the families and communities they left to defend. The realistic alternatives to nobility and heroism could not be adequately expressed using classical imagery and Nolan's depictions of returned soldiers are, therefore, devoid of the classical and haunted by reality. One striking example of this is an early Anzac portrait, 'Head of a Soldier' (1942), which vividly depicts the toll war takes on an individual. The soldier's face is worn and distorted, his eyes are wide and bloodshot to indicate the horrors of what they have witnessed, and the dark circles beneath them reveal that he has not slept for quite some time, haunted by his experience.

Nolan's 'Gallipoli Landscape with recumbent Greek figure' expresses the same trauma evident in his portraits of returned soldiers. However, this is in a manner that questions the grandeur of war and the tradition of depicting the dead as beautiful. The statue in his painting is, at once, mutilated and eternally beautiful and this recalls the words of Priam in Book 22 of Homer's *Iliad* (22.71–3):

For a young man all is decorous when he is cut down in battle
And torn with the sharp bronze, and lies there
dead, and though still dead all that shows about him is beautiful.

For Priam, in death all young men who died in battle are beautiful because of the nature in which they died. This sentiment lies at the very heart of the Anzac narrative, which promotes the sacrifice of life as heroic and noble, and is reinforced with commemorative

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sculptures depicting peacefully sleeping men rendered in classical style. Nolan challenges the traditional use of the classical style to mute the horror of war and instead draws on the classical to highlight the visceral reality of war. The subtle gruesomeness in this painting conveys the idea that, although art can express war as something beautiful and noble, once you get past constructed representations, the trauma of war lies just below the surface. It is this hidden trauma that Nolan's father experienced and the artist was so interested in understanding.

Returning to the 'Gallipoli' diptych, also evident are allusions to Francisco Goya's 'A heroic feat! With dead men!', Plate 39 from his *Disasters of War* series.⁷ The inverted legs of Goya's decapitated man are echoed in each of Nolan's canvases, and the hanging head of the man in the right-hand corner of Nolan's left-hand panel echoes that of the man bound to the tree in the centre of Goya's print. In the same way that Nolan's recumbent Greek figure highlights the brutality of war, Goya's mutilation of the beautifully rendered classical form forces the viewer to confront war's ugliness, and this then becomes a feature of 'Gallipoli'. The waste of beautiful specimens of humanity explored in Goya's series is also a feature of criticism about the Gallipoli campaign and the Great War generally (Bouvier 2011). The mutilation of youth and beauty epitomized in classical sculpture is a technique common to Goya that is also evident in numerous paintings in the *Gallipoli Series* including 'Landscape with recumbent Greek figure'. However, in other paintings from the series, Nolan stripped his images of pictorial niceties so the audience could 'embrace the fact of suffering and death as beauty' (Pearce 2007: 47). This beauty took the place of the peaceful and serene so common in depictions of deceased Great War soldiers.

Ancient Greek art and mutilated Anzacs

The bloody consequences of war are particularly evident in the painting 'Gallipoli soldier in red amid explosion' (1961) that depicts a soldier being blown to pieces, losing a leg and having his internal organs exposed (Adams 1987: 132). In this painting, Nolan clearly connects the broken bodies of war and the sculpture he saw in Athens. At the 'Australian War Memorial's "Gallipoli Series" Exhibition' in Bunbury, Western Australia (2011), the panel that accompanied this painting read: 'According to the artist, this represents a shattered body, the missing limb and torn flesh powerfully rendered through expressive lines of bright red recall the damaged statues Nolan had seen in Athens.'

Nolan painted numerous visual amalgamations of the antique statues he saw in Delphi, Athens and throughout Europe, and the returned Great War soldiers with missing limbs he remembered from his childhood. The wounded Gallipoli soldier on crutches depicted in 'Anzac, "Walking Wounded"' (1957) is reminiscent of ancient Greek *kouros* statuary. *Kouros* traditionally depict beautiful nude male youths in a distinctive pose: *kouros* stand with their arms positioned closely alongside the torso, the elbows sometimes bent a little, and their hands held against the thigh. The feet of the statue are set apart, the left positioned as though it is taking a step forward. The thighs are elongated to emphasize the beauty of the youth, the torso exhibits broad shoulders tapering to a narrow waist,

and the stomach is carved to display the young man's muscular tone. In 'Anzac, "Walking Wounded"', Nolan parallels the wounded soldier with the *kouroi* by depicting a headless male figure: his legs are set apart with one foot in advance of the other; his hands merge into the crutches causing his arms to bend at the elbow, while remaining close to the torso. In other paintings, too, Nolan draws on classical sculpture for inspiration. The stance of '[Gallipoli figure]' (c. 1957) recalls that of the fifth-century BC bronze Poseidon (Zeus?) throwing a spear (thunderbolt?) displayed in the National Museum, Athens. The strength of Poseidon's stance is drawn upon in this image to direct attention to the Anzac's prosthetic limb, which illustrates this individual's loss as a result of his war service. Another painting, 'Torso' (1960), emphasizes the muscular chest and stomach of the limbless figure and recalls the second-century BC Hellenistic 'Gaddi Torso' on display in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence. The beautiful classical torso replicated by Nolan conveys the visceral reality of death and mutilation, representing the loss of strength and vitality. These parallels encourage the viewer to confront the true nature of war and question traditional depictions of death as peaceful or beautiful. By depicting soldiers with missing limbs drawn from classical statuary, Nolan insists that the viewer consider the wastefulness and destruction of war at an individual human level.



Figure 13.3 Sidney Nolan. 'Gallipoli figures in battle I', 1962. Australian War Memorial ART91319.

Nolan also used ancient Greek vase paintings to capture the intimacy of mortal combat and offer viewers an insight into the highly charged and personal moment of death (Page 1978: 15). This is exemplified in 'Gallipoli figures in battle I' (1962). In the exhibition catalogue that accompanied the travelling *Gallipoli Series* exhibition (2009–11), this painting is compared to the pan-Athenaic prize amphora signed by Kittos the potter (Wilkins and Webster 2009: 9). The angular lines and closeness of the fighting figures recall those depicted on the ancient Greek vase. This style of fighting would have been a virtually non-existent part of the trench-style warfare in the Gallipoli campaign, although descriptions of hand-to-hand combat do contribute to the mythology of the Anzac narrative. The British war correspondent Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett (1915: 5) described the Gallipoli landing as a closely fought struggle between Australian and Turkish soldiers:

The Australians rose to the occasion. They did not wait for orders, or for the boats to reach the beach, but sprang into the sea, formed a sort of rough line and rushed at the enemy's trenches. Their magazines were not charged, so they just went in with cold steel, and it was over in a minute for the Turks in the first trench had been either bayoneted or had run away.

Ashmead-Bartlett's words recall the intimate fighting scenes from the *Iliad* and other Greek myths depicted on the vases Nolan saw while in Europe.

A bloody battle between the Greeks and the Trojans is described in Book 4 of the *Iliad* (4.447–51):

... they dashed their shields together and their spears, and the strength of armoured men in bronze, and the shields massive in the middle clashed against each other, and the sound grew huge of the fighting. There the screaming and the shouts of triumph rose up together of men killing and being killed, and the ground ran with blood.

Nolan felt that 'there is a kind of grandeur ... natural about Homer [that] one can feel is related to Anzac' (Page 1978: 5). Just as Nolan's art was largely concerned with the individual soldier rather than military strategy, so too was the *Iliad*. Homer wrote about individuals and was more concerned with mortal heroes than the immortal gods because, being mortal, heroes could better articulate the human consequences of war (Griffin 1980: 9). Nolan's choice to depict soldiers locked in mortal combat surrounded by blood and viscera demonstrates his preoccupation with the fate of the individual and the depiction of the human side of war, which he acknowledged was inspired by the *Iliad* (Page 1978: 5). The fate of the individual for Nolan was the human element of war and the subject he was most interested in depicting.

Nolan believed that the lessons espoused in Homeric epic were directly applicable to the Anzac narrative, and he explored this notion by making explicit connections between the events of 1915, ancient Greek myth and classical art. However, for Nolan, any

grandeur evident in ancient depictions of war was complicated by the terrible realities he had personally witnessed and experienced. These realities included the return of broken and mutilated soldiers to Australia and the grief that permeated whole communities and crippled families long after the First and Second World Wars ended. In the *Gallipoli Series* Nolan uses his own grief and the feelings of loss caused by his brother's death to better understand the human experience of war. He draws on classical art and literature to demand his audience consider the overwhelming cost of war to the individual, their family and the broader community, and the persistence of the phenomenon of war despite such consequences. He insists his audience confront the harshness and trauma of war and implores them to always remember that at the very heart of every war is the fundamental reality of human mortality.

CHAPTER 14

OF HEROES AND HUMANS: MARIAN MAGUIRE'S COLONIZATION OF HERAKLES' MYTHICAL WORLD

Melinda Johnston and Thomas Köntges

Marian Maguire's narrative series *The Labours of Herakles* (2006–8) is an internationally renowned demonstration of the widespread Reception of Greek mythology.¹ Using classical and New Zealand references, Maguire asks the audience to question the processes of colonization and investigates myth creation itself. However, trying to capture the shifting nature of Herakles and his interactions in each of Maguire's prints often raises more questions than it answers, showing the dynamic, mutable and fraught processes of cultural exchange.

Born in Christchurch in 1962, Maguire's background is in visual arts, rather than an academic training in Classics. She studied printmaking at the University of Canterbury's School of Fine Arts, Christchurch, and then at the Tamarind Institute, Albuquerque, New Mexico, where she refined her lithography skills. Maguire is co-director of PG Gallery (formerly PaperGraphica) in Christchurch, and through her work as a master printer has collaborated with many of New Zealand's leading artists. Maguire has established herself as a leading figure in contemporary New Zealand printmaking and has also found an international audience, with her *Herakles* series the most well travelled.

For over a decade, Maguire has been working in a style characterized by devices borrowed from Greek vase painting coupled with the insertion of classical figures into New Zealand settings. *The Labours of Herakles* is the third of four narrative series in this style. The first of these, *Southern Myths* (2002), established the basic premise with a suite of nine etchings in which she placed Ajax and Achilles in New Zealand landscape settings and applied decorative elements from Greek art. The second suite, *The Odyssey of Captain Cook* (2005), comprised ten lithographs and re-cast the British explorer Captain James Cook into a story '[i]n which the Greeks arrive aboard Cook's Endeavour and meet resident Maori' (Maguire 2012: 34). In *Herakles*, Maguire casts the Greek hero as a New Zealand pioneer, whose adventures play out across twelve lithographs and eight etchings. The fourth series, from 2011, comprised three suites of prints: *Titokowaru's Dilemma* (eleven lithographs), *A Taranaki Dialogue* (six etchings) and *Colonial Encounters* (ten etchings). While the etchings point to modern-day issues and cross-cultural interaction, the lithographs feature war leader Riwha Titokowaru and Socrates. The three central narrative series (the *Odyssey*, *Herakles* and *Titokowaru*) can be read as a chronological progression beginning with Cook's 'discovery' of New Zealand, developing through Herakles and the period of colonization, to Titokowaru and the New Zealand Wars.²

Our focus in this chapter is the lithographic suite of prints that, along with a suite of eight etchings, make up *The Labours of Herakles*, both of which provide examples of Maguire's understanding of myth creation and Reception as well as her use of time and sequence.³ The etchings focus on daily interactions in colonial New Zealand, including local character traits such as so-called 'Kiwi ingenuity', colonial gentility, practical thinking and societal humility. They also humorously celebrate New Zealand's success at being the first country to allow women the vote and wryly allude to environmental and logistical problems. While still deserving further research, our intention here is to read the lithographic suite, rather than the etchings, as a narrative sequence, exploring how Maguire combines an episodic structure with a wider sequential narrative to generate an alternative mythology of the colonization of New Zealand and the development of Pākehā identity.

The Labours of Herakles is a modern adaptation of a classical mythological story, told with a picaresque twist. The ancient superman Herakles, idealized as super-colonizer and at first successful and optimistic about his deeds, fails and finds that the country he came to change, changes him. Superman becomes human and at the same time more likable. Seen through a lens of ancient Greek culture, Maguire approaches her narrative from three angles: the colonizer (mostly British), the colonized (Māori) and the colonizer colonized (Pākehā), a product of the cultural exchange between the two. By acknowledging but transcending both the heroic deeds of the canonical Herakles and the grand British narrative of colonization, she creates a new mythology that sheds light on the complicated and ongoing process of identity formation.

Scholarship and exhibitions

We can see the Reception of Maguire's *Herakles* as sitting within at least three distinct frameworks: a history of Herakles Reception; direct written responses to the works; and the various manifestations of its exhibition history. In the former category, Emma Stafford (2012) provides a summary of the Reception of the myth of Herakles from its beginning in ancient Greece, particularly Attic black-figure vase painting, through to twentieth- and twenty-first-century art and popular culture, including Maguire's prints. From antiquity to modern times, Stafford observes that the most abiding image of Herakles is 'the strong man fighting a monster' but that further stories were attached to him, so that he became the 'original flawed superhero' (2012: 23, 244). Stafford's work at the University of Leeds' Hercules Project has included an exhibition of Maguire's *Herakles*, and she ascribes the series' success to the 'inventive fusion of art-historical models, reflective of the complex relationships of colonialism' (2012: 241).

In the second category, the text *The Labours of Herakles*, published by PaperGraphica in 2008 and reissued in 2015, provides the artist-sanctioned 'official' view of the works and gives a comprehensive record of Maguire's intentions. Art historian Elizabeth Rankin provides an essay on the works and their Greek sources. Maguire also recounts the way in which she grounded her work in historical publications and photographs from the

nineteenth century. In the updated version of the catalogue, Rolf Schneider considers the works at the time of their exhibition at the Antikensammlung in Munich in 2015. Additionally, Greta Hawes (2015) has focused on the settling aspect of the prints by comparing them with Anne Salmond's historical research. Hawes sees Herakles: '[as] a tourist, he doesn't belong, and will soon move on. After all, he always did. Even in antiquity, Herakles seldom lingered in one place long enough to put down roots' (2015: 17). However, she also writes: 'Our Herakles, then, has begun to be transformed by his environment, even as he works his own transformations on it' (2015: 22). In contrast with Hawes' tourist claim, this chapter demonstrates that the cultural exchange between Herakles and New Zealand changes the protagonist as he begins to assume a Pākehā identity.

The series is well travelled, with each exhibition varying the series' focus and adding to its accreted meanings. After being shown on eighteen occasions in New Zealand (2008–12), it was exhibited at five northern hemisphere venues, including in the United Kingdom, Germany and Belgium, making it Maguire's first narrative series presented outside the Anglophone world. While the English title of the series remained unchanged in the United Kingdom, the German title *Herakles in Neuseeland* and the French title *Héraclès chez les Maori* disclose Maguire's main theme: reflections on the colonization of New Zealand. When *Herakles* travelled to both Munich and Würzburg it was accompanied by four prints from *The Odyssey of Captain Cook* as well as classical vases from each host institution's collection. As Schneider noted in his catalogue entry, the meeting of vases and prints echoed the content of the series itself, as the black-figure Herakles and his contemporary counterpart in New Zealand 'meet each other as familiar strangers, just as Herakles and Māori do in the Maguire world' (2015: 15).

In Munich, assuming a clockwise circuit of the exhibition space, the etchings came first, as opposed to their second place in the published text, while the most significant departure from the book's order saw the twelfth lithograph, on the struggle with the taniwha, precede the first. In Würzburg, assuming the same movement, the four works from *The Odyssey* came first, followed by the etchings, then the lithographs, although there too the most significant change was to place the twelfth lithograph before the others. Thus, with each new reception of the series we are presented with a new version of Maguire's own *Herakles*, as each writer, critic, curator and exhibition visitor constructs their own reading, shifting the focus and adding to the layers of history.

Narrative and time in the series

Our use of the word 'narrative' follows Maguire's use on her website: a story or account that refers to an event or events that happened in the fictional or non-fictional past of the narrator. However, as Rankin has explained, the dual narratives of colonizer and First Nation Peoples can vary so much as to seem contradictory, and so Maguire introduces a third voice, 'explicating and complicating colonial confluences and conflicts with the myths and legends of Ancient Greece' (Rankin 2012a: 428). Maguire therefore eschews a

single viewpoint, preferring a pluralistic history, presenting her narratives through a triangulated approach between South Pacific, European and ancient Greek elements, which Hawes describes as her 'calling card' (2017: 131). Maguire believes this approach means that 'positions are less fixed and polarity is reduced' (Maguire 2017: 114). While it has been common to read this openness as a characteristic of the series, we believe that the narrative itself is considerably more sequential than has previously been recognized.

This sequence is not chronological, however, because Maguire collapses historical time and geographical space. This deliberate strategy is less problematic for the audience than one might expect, because, as Maguire explained to Jessica Hughes (2012): 'people frequently think of the past as one huge lump.' This viewpoint is particularly fitting for the new world and by placing her Herakles only a few generations back, it exposes the hegemonies in play. As Maguire further noted, 'it puts early New Zealand history into a mythic era, or at least recognises that history can be mythologised' (Hughes 2012).

The *Herakles* narrative exists as a series of discrete episodes in the picaresque tradition, but also nods to the episodic nature of the canonical twelve labours. While Maguire's lithographs carry the plot forward, her etchings are more difficult to put into a chronological sequence (indeed, both Würzburg and Munich employed their own order). The lithographs, though, do follow a kind of logical narrative sequence, inasmuch as the progression in the publication focused on the transformation of the land, which is 'bought' and fought for, cleared, dug, then used for farming. Furthermore, they refer to documented historical events, with the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi (1840) beginning the labours and New Zealand's Gallipoli campaign (1915–16) ending them, as the second and eleventh prints respectively.⁴ It is also these historical events that have begun to determine New Zealand's own self-constructed sense of identity, and in doing so have attracted a kind of mythic quality.

Given the *Odyssey* and *Titokowaru* series both drew on real historical figures, why then use the mythical figure of Herakles for the series on colonization? Maguire herself notes that her lack of affection meant she could bend him to her needs, while his lion skin and club make him easily recognizable, even within different stylistic registers. It also relates to his character, 'because he had not only the kind of bloody-minded determination I imagined would be necessary to carry out a task no matter the difficulty, but also the bluntness of intellect required to sweep away uneasy moral considerations' (Maguire 2008: 67). Certainly, a key part of the Herakles myth relates to the concept of physical strength, with a herculean task beyond that of most mortals but, as Stafford also pointed out, he has a 'more complicated life-story, and a more extensive portfolio of exploits, than any other Greek hero' (2012: 1).

It is those exploits and the twelve labours that provided Maguire with the series' starting point. While the canonical twelve labours took on an increasingly set aspect from the time of their first clear representation on the temple of Zeus at Olympia (c. 460 BC), Maguire chose to open this up by setting him new tasks. Although there are twelve lithographs, there is no neat match between the prints and the labours. Similarly, while the classical Herakles completed several *parerga* or 'deeds on the side', the etchings allow further scope for minor deeds, but also do not closely match classical sources. As for the

motivation behind the labours, according to classical mythology, Herakles had to serve a twelve-year atonement sentence in service to his cousin Eurystheus, after Herakles killed his own wife and their offspring while temporarily insane. We don't know if and why Maguire's Herakles was conscripted to colonize New Zealand, but his tasks are summarized in the first lithograph.

As well as the content of the Herakles myth and the sense of his character that has come down to us from ancient Greece, Maguire also uses classical visual sources in her work. Sometimes this is a general stylistic echo, such as a lack of foreshortening or the use of earth-coloured lines through black ground to echo the slip and base colour of Greek vases, but it also includes specific quotations drawn from more famous vases, such as her use of Exekias' depiction of Ajax and Achilles playing dice, taken from a vase in the Vatican Museum (c. 540–30 BC). A key difference between the two, as Rankin has noted, is that ancient Greek art left the wider environment to the viewer, whereas Maguire takes up the unspoken invitation (2012b: 9). The effect of this addition also increases the narrative potential, because she can locate action, which meant that people 'stopped seeing her figures as purely decorative, as they had in the 1990s, and began to seek storylines'.⁵ The use of black-figure vase painting is also particularly appropriate for Herakles, with Herakles' stories accounting for almost half of all mythological scenes in surviving black-figure ware (Stafford 2012: 18). Furthermore, for Maguire, when juxtaposed with photographs or paintings, '[i]t exposes the lie rather than conceal[s] it' (Hughes 2012).

As well as classical visual sources, Maguire also draws from reproduced images and iconic artworks from New Zealand's history. In the *Odyssey*, she used the work of engravers from the time of Cook's voyages, where 'detail was guessed at, or fudged', resulting in work that was 'only approximately faithful to the original' (Maguire 2005: 5). For the *Herakles* series, she included historical photographs and returned to Charles Heaphy's famous painting of Mount Egmont (Taranaki).

Maguire also made extensive use of early settler accounts. Initially, she saw a clear link between the determination and hard work of Herakles and the labour of early colonists. The first four works completed included an agile and motivated Herakles, who 'forged in from the left, his whole body in the frame, and he succeeded at whatever he set out to do. These lithographs are the closest to his portrayal on the ancient Greek vases' (Maguire 2015: 102). However, as Maguire read the diaries and accounts of early settlers, the range of these stories affected her thinking, especially because 'the predictable success of classical Herakles did not tally with the range of settler experience' (Maguire 2015: 102). In reading the first-person accounts and looking at the photos, she also sensed their doubt about destroying in order to create, and 'could no longer think of the colonists as a type, a caricature, like the cardboard cutout Herakles [she] had started with' (Maguire 2008: 68).

With doubt also came failure, and it is here that a key difference between Maguire's Herakles and the mythical figure exists. Often this failure plays out in the title itself, or in its relationship with the image. As well as her clever use of titles playing on museological categorizations and descriptions (more obviously present in her other series), it is worth

noting that Maguire studied with printmaker Barry Cleavin, who is known for his clash of text and image, using titles to further a work's meaning or to shift the ground beneath the viewer (Johnston 2013). Most titles in Maguire's work are one-sentence descriptions of what is seen in the picture, but at times the discrepancy between the visual and the literal cues is humorous. In seventeen of the twenty titles Herakles describes the agent of the sentence; and five of the eight etchings contain the word 'attempts' in the title.

Maguire, like her Herakles, finished the series changed and 'aware that there is more to colonialism than I had understood at the beginning' (Maguire 2008: 68). While she still believes that British settlement in New Zealand was devastating to the Māori, she also now believes that 'the endeavours of the pioneers and settlers were challenging in the extreme' and that through a series of upheavals, the land and people were transformed: '[t]he seeds of Pakeha culture were planted and that is where I come from, so I want to know about it' (Maguire 2008: 68). It is that transformation, through the labours and historical events, that leads Herakles from idealized super-colonizer to a more fully human realization reflecting the beginnings of a Pākehā identity.

The lithographs

As previously stated, our intention is to read the works as a narrative sequence, exploring each print in turn to see how Maguire combines an episodic structure with a wider sequential narrative. The lithographic suite, as per the catalogue order, begins with an introductory image with the same title as the series itself (Figure 14.1). Rankin describes it as a 'a visual "contents page"' (2008: 21), but it also acts as a to-do list for Herakles



Figure 14.1 Marian Maguire. 'The Labours of Herakles', 2007–8. Lithograph. © Marian Maguire.

himself, providing a glimpse of the labours necessary for New Zealand to become part of the British colonizing plan. The print features six vases, with the two largest featuring landscape scenes derived from famous colonial paintings by Heaphy.⁶ However, as Rankin notes, Heaphy's vision of Mount Taranaki has been altered: the forest has been cleared and replaced with a row of pines, with the decorative bands of cattle and sheep suggesting more economically fruitful uses of the land (2008: 22). Three of the four smaller vases show Herakles modifying the land by surveying, planting and rearing cattle. The smallest vase 'shows Herakles carrying off a Māori carving to a Doric temple, acknowledging the plundering of First Nation culture by foreign conquerors' (Rankin 2008: 22), but it also provides a possible link with Herakles' attempt to steal the tripod at Delphi.

In this first print, the viewer is already alerted to Maguire's use of classical sources. The image of tree-planting is derived from Exekias' vase painting of the suicide of Ajax, but also references Maguire's previous use of that image in *Southern Myths*. This kind of inter- and intratextuality is a feature of Maguire's work, where images are used and re-used and events are foreshadowed to echo the classical past, New Zealand's artistic history and her own oeuvre. For Maguire, the vessels are also significant carriers: 'At one time containers of the everyday [they] now carry the memory of a culture that . . . is part of the Western historical line. Empty but full vessels' (Maguire 2005: 6). The vases also show Maguire's use of visual form to reflect the episodic narrative. This becomes particularly clear if we compare the image with the first lithographs from the *Odyssey* and *Titokowaru's Dilemma*. In the earlier lithograph, 'Attic Volute Crater, 1779, Depicting Scenes from the Odyssey of Captain Cook' (2005), Maguire used the form of the crater to carry one continuous narrative, told through several bands of black-figure decoration. In the later work, 'Curio from the Colonial Era: Artisan unknown. Dated 1860–1880. Taranaki origin' (2011), Titokowaru himself becomes part of the vase as he reaches to maintain his hold on his ancestral land. Both single vases contrast with the multiple vases in the Herakles print, suggesting the episodic nature this series will take.

The second print, 'Herakles signs the Treaty of Waitangi', was one of the first four successful deeds and immediately shifts the series from the symbolic first image towards referencing a documented historical event. Right from the outset then, the viewer is alerted to the mix of mythological and historical sources. The signing also sets up a clear meeting of two cultures, with Herakles occupying the fraught ground between. To the left stands Queen Victoria with the Union Jack conveying the might of the British Empire, while the Māori chief on the right, derived from a Sydney Parkinson drawing,⁷ is backed by his ancestors on the carved poupou and wears an elaborate outfit befitting his status.⁸ The inclusion of the Māori carving is worth noting because Maguire sees links between the Māori carvers and the Greek vase-painters, whose 'virtuosity was constrained by convention and expectation, for their carvings partnered an oral storytelling tradition and were made to fit a philosophically balanced societal whole' (Maguire 2005: 6).

The third print, 'Herakles discusses Boundary Issues with the Neighbours' (Figure 14.2), is the most comprehensively considered, with Rankin comparing it to 'Ko wai koe (who



Figure 14.2 Marian Maguire. 'Herakles discusses Boundary Issues with the Neighbours', 2007. Lithograph. © Marian Maguire.

are you)?' (2008) from the *Odyssey* series. In Rankin's reading of 'Ko wai koe', neither Māori nor European voyager 'is portrayed in a form that derives from his own culture' and so can be 'understood as being perceived by the one who confronts him' (Rankin 2008: 9). Rankin sees the figures 'facing up' to each other, so that 'the sense of inquiry works in both directions in this fictive meeting, affirmed by the bilingual title of the print' (2015: 21). In contrast, Schneider sees 'the native and the stranger nose to nose – but not eye to eye: the Māori can see the Greek but the Greek cannot see the Māori' (2015: 11–12). This suggests two very different readings of the profile presentations. For Schneider, the black-figure style's frontal presentation of the eye impedes the figures from looking at each other (they look out of the frame), so that in the *Herakles* version, 'it is now the black-figure Māori who cannot see his opposite' (2015: 12–13). Maguire herself indicated her reading to Hawes: she sees her profile figures as looking into the picture rather than out of it, because this 'leaves the viewer free to watch the action as a voyeur without being challenged or pressured by anyone inside the picture staring back at them' (Hughes 2012).

Knowledge of 'Ko wai koe' allows the viewer to see that Maguire has reversed the image for the *Herakles* series: Louis Auguste de Sainson's head, deprived of its moko (tā moko is the traditional Māori tattoo), is now used for Herakles, while Parkinson's head is portrayed in black-figure style, but with a Māori presence. This interrelatedness was stressed in Würzburg, where the flyer asked: 'How do I meet the stranger and what effect does the meeting have on my own cultural identity?'⁹ Similarly, the visual analogies drawn between the spiral patterning have also been commented upon. Rankin notes that 'the incised decorations of the Greek helmet reiterate the spiral patterns of the Māori moko, conjuring up a mutual aesthetic of decoration to venerate warrior valour, found in both cultures in a pre-contact world' (2015: 22).

The mutual interrogation presented in the third print soon changes in the fourth, 'Herakles surprised by Maoris who were driven off with Heavy Losses', where contact has turned into open aggression. The print functions as a comment on the mythologizing nature of history and the heroic visual 'records' that helped affirm the European perspective. Drawing from Major Gustav von Tempsky's painting, 'British camp surprised by Maoris who were driven off with Heavy Losses' (n.d.), Maguire has repeated the use of the now-obsolete plural 'Maoris' in the title, reflecting how she believes von Tempsky himself would have spoken and emphasizing the European perspective.¹⁰ Here, Maguire also breaks with the previously employed frieze effect as the black figures transcend their traditional flatness to move within the naturalistic landscape.¹¹ As one of the first four lithographs produced, Herakles completes his task; however, from today's viewpoint, the swashbuckling 'success' is questionable.

The fifth print, 'Herakles goes Hunting', was also one of the initial images of success. While Rankin suggests it may link with Herakles' successful capturing of the Ceryneian hind (2008: 15), we might also connect it with Herakles killing the Stymphalian birds, which is the only labour where he traditionally used a bow and arrow, instead of his club, bare hands or cunning. If he does indeed 'hunt', as with the birds, rather than capture, as with the hind, we can assume that the labour was a 'success'. However, a subtler meaning is conveyed through Maguire's use of labelled forms, a seventh-century development for Greek vase painting (Shapiro 1994: 6), and one she had previously employed in *Southern Myths*.¹² Maguire makes pointed use of the technique: the introduced species (boar, possum, goat, rat, deer, rabbit and Herakles) are all labelled, while the native kiwi and tree spirit are not.

In the sixth print, 'Herakles clears the Land', Maguire gives the first indication of the changes that are being wrought on Herakles himself. This is particularly clear if we compare the head and lion-skin with its earlier presentation in 'Boundary Issues' (Figure 14.2). In the former, the lion's eyes are open and his teeth intact, as opposed to the clear signs of wear expressed in the sixth work. Similarly, de Sainson's head also expresses strain and age, an expression of Maguire's finding that: 'At times individual settlers were beset by ethical dilemmas, they recognized the destructive impact of what they were doing, but more often it was the survival instinct that set in' (2015: 102).

While the portrayal of Herakles links back to the third lithograph, the work's background derives from colonial photographs of forest-burning, whose destructive nature lends an ambivalent quality to the success of the 'clearing'. The role of the Māori spirit is left open: Rankin says the viewer is left to decide whether it has been forcibly driven from the forest by Herakles' acts or has appeared to demand retribution (2015: 44), while Hawes argues that '[i]n ridding his new land of its resident taniwha, Herakles is clearing this paddock of the genealogical and mythological traditions to which it once belonged' (2015: 22).¹³ Maguire, then, rounds out the first half of the suite with an image that significantly complicates both the work of colonization, through the connection of destruction and creation, and the success of Herakles, who is now beset with doubt.

In the seventh print, however, it is the mythic Herakles' quality of dogged determination that wins as we see him tirelessly digging in 'Herakles dreams of Arcadia'. For Rankin,

Maguire is poking 'gentle fun at the pre-eminence of brawn over brain in the rather unimaginative perseverance with which Herakles toils' (2012a: 430). It also perhaps relates to Maguire's suggestion that a survival instinct set in, with a Greek vase functioning as a stylized thought-bubble presenting an Arcadia that helps compensate for Herakles' growing doubt. As Maguire has noted, while early migrants were faced with 'thick strange forest, scrub and swamp', it was the countryside of the British Isles that represented everything they believed 'a landscape should be' (Maguire 2017: 115). Beyond this contrast, however, the dreamed-of view is also problematic, because as Hawes pointed out, '[i]n Arcadia, the rabbit held by the maenad might be understood as a symbol of the region's easy fertility. But in New Zealand, this gift proved destructive' (2015: 23).

In the eighth print, 'Herakles writes Home', Maguire uses the vase form to contain an image expressing the colonist's complicated position, caught between two worlds, 'not quite belonging to the old world or the new' (Rankin 2008: 14). Both Hawes and Rankin have commented on the range of books housed on the shelf above, pointing out the joke of Aristotle's 'Discourse on Place and Time' in the bookcase (2015: 15), while Rankin stresses the texts are in English as 'the language of colonial culture and control' (2008: 14). The presence of the Māori-Greek dictionary has also been widely noted, stressing the need for communication.

This is a scene rich with symbolic detail. The direct reference is to Maguire's oft-used source of Exekias' famous vase of Achilles and Ajax playing dice. Rankin suggests that 'the disheartening vista' seen through the window is derived from a photograph, and 'is a sharp reminder that the simple comforts within were achieved only by endless labour without' (2008: 15). It is also worth noting Gerald Scarfe's use of vases as stylized comment on the proceedings in the Disney movie *Hercules* (1997). In this vein, the mementoes and keepsakes on the shelves, including the small Venus de Milo and the vase with Union Jack, form a kind of 'classical kitsch' that functions self-reflexively to bring the viewer's attention back to the constructed nature of the scene. Again, there is precedent in Scarfe's *Hercules*, which makes a wry nod at the merchandizing of classical 'products', such as air-herc sandals (Stafford 2012: 239).

After these three doubt-ridden images, Maguire's narrative changes tone to allow the hero success in 'Herakles takes up Dairy Farming' (Figure 14.3). The print could refer to the tenth labour to retrieve the cattle of Geryon, but again, Maguire mixes local visual sources with classical precedents. As noted by Rankin, Maguire has directly quoted a black-figure vase (c. 525–20 BC) by the Lysipides painter from the workshop of the Andokides potter, in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2008: 15). Similarly, the background is another example of her frequent use of Heaphy's image of Mount Egmont, although in each iteration the landscape is altered to add to the meaning. Here we see the process of deforestation in action, as Herakles cuts a path from left to right, removing the bulk of the native species and introducing (poisonous) foxgloves at left.

The tenth print provides an example of the way in which Maguire's humour functions to lighten what is perhaps one of the most pessimistic images. In 'Athena is dismayed at the Lack of Progress Herakles has made towards Arcadia', we have the first blatant



Figure 14.3 Marian Maguire. 'Herakles takes up Dairy Farming', 2006–7. Lithograph. © Marian Maguire.

acknowledgement that things are not going according to the grand plan laid out in the first print. Athena, usually supportive of Herakles' efforts, stands over him, her face providing an amusing commentary on interpersonal relations, which considerably lightens the despair so clearly evidenced in Herakles' pose. Furthermore, as Rankin points out, the combination of a view of Ngatapa with the ruins of his own civilization, 'acknowledges that even great civilisations pass' (2008: 20).

As previously noted, the penultimate print, 'Herakles goes to Gallipoli', stands as a key moment in the creation of the myth of New Zealand nationhood, closing the series as the second print's reference to the Treaty of Waitangi opened it. While contentious, the myth of New Zealand identity forged in the slaughter of Gallipoli is long-standing. Maguire places her black-figure Herakles between the Māori soldier, derived from Natai's head, and her now Pākehā soldier, derived from a photo of a colonial wrestling champion. Rankin suggests Herakles stands as a symbol of heroic bravery, but also the mindless losses of combat (2015: 57). Patrick O'Sullivan, on the other hand, links it with Sophocles' *Philoktetes*, where Herakles resolves the dispute between *Philoktetes* and *Odysseus* so they could conquer Troy, acting as 'a symbol of not only Panhellenic unity but also of warrior valour generally' (2008: 61).

The three figures face left, which suggests they are facing the place from which they have come. For Rankin, 'they have a pensive vulnerability that questions imperial values and suggests how the young colony again suffers in the cause of the ambitions of a distant motherland' (2012a: 432). As ever, though, the image is difficult to pin down, although if we read it in conjunction with the second print we can see that the narrative has moved from Herakles between Empire and Māori, to Herakles between Māori and Pākehā, who

together look back to Europe to fight on behalf of the British Empire. In any case, it is undoubtedly the climactic moment of the suite's narrative, in which, as Giovanni Tiso wrote, 'we witness [Herakles'] transformation into what we may be inclined to call a New Zealander' (Tiso 2009).

The final lithograph functions, as with her other series, as a vertical 'full stop' to the suite, although any sense of finality is refuted by the content itself (Figure 14.4). Possibly linking with the eleventh labour to fetch the golden apples of the Hesperides, during which Herakles wrestled with Triton, the central struggle is reminiscent of numerous such scenes on Greek vases, with Triton substituted for a taniwha. Maguire sees the work as 'sea-based labours in compendium form on a banded vase', and if we read the bands down the image, then a sequential progression develops: the voyages of discovery see the Māori come from the east and Captain Cook from the west; next come the early whalers; then the three ships bringing settlers; followed by the key scene of struggle between Herakles as colonizer and the taniwha, here in its kaitiaki (protector) role of the First Nation People. There are then further waves of immigrants from the west, before soldiers board a boat headed back to Europe. Read in this way, the image provides a more historically grounded chronology than the 'task list' of the first image, which perhaps explains its opening position in the German exhibitions, although Maguire believes that this work (the sea-based labours) and the first print (the land-based labours) can be hung anywhere without upsetting the sequence.

For Rankin, the central battle dominates, and 'while it may seem that the land is tamed, ancestral spiritual forces still prevail' (2012a: 432). Maguire suggests that 'the



Figure 14.4 Marian Maguire. 'Herakles struggles with the Taniwha', 2007–8. Lithograph. © Marian Maguire.

taniwha represents the forces of the ocean' and 'while humans may be able to dominate the land, the ocean can never be tamed.' It is for this reason she chose the word 'struggles' for the title, as he (and we) can't win. For Hawes, however, it's even less conclusive, where 'one becomes unsure of what constitutes victory and defeat' (2015: 25–6). Seen in this way, we are back to something closer to the contradictions inherent in the character of the classical Herakles. As O'Sullivan expressed it: 'Herakles was a man of unsurpassable strength and courage, a culture hero, monster-slaying saviour and emblem of self-restraint and endurance; yet he was also a buffoonish glutton and boozier; and again, a murderer condemned to slavery and transvestism' (2008: 57). For Stafford, this is quite possibly the root of Herakles' long life: he is the 'reliable defender of civilization, but at the same time his excesses bring destruction on himself and others', with the two sides to his character in constant tension, although they tip towards the positive by his apotheosis, so that he can be read as 'a model for the common man, who might ultimately hope to follow him into the company of the gods' (2012: 244). Under this reading, the very essence of Herakles, the constant tensions within his character, find their palpable corollary in the tension between Māori and Herakles, between First Nation Peoples and colonizer.

Conclusion

Marian Maguire's *Labours of Herakles* is a successful series that has found an international audience by using a modern adaptation of a classical mythological story to question the cultural exchanges and transformations of colonization. Maguire moves beyond both the heroic deeds of the canonical Herakles as well as the grand narrative of colonization as told from a British perspective to create a new Reception of these two myths. While remaining true to the episodic nature of the canonical labours, even though not mirroring their content, Maguire's lithographs show how the processes of colonization gradually led to the development of a kind of Pākehā identity. The difficulties behind the grand narrative are complex though, and the artist is aware that 'a string of events flowing from one episode to the next' is not 'how reality is'; rather, 'the whole thing is fuller and rounder'. As a further demonstration that history can be non-linear and multiple, and both homely and epic, Maguire uses the eight additional etchings to provide a more domesticated and humorous view of colonization. After completing the original labours, the canonical Herakles became a god; instead, through his experience in New Zealand, Maguire's Herakles is made humble and human. Maguire creates a mythology that sheds light on the founding of New Zealand's multifaceted culture, while recognizing that it is still subject to an ongoing process of cultural exchange.

PART VI

ANTIQUITY ON THE AUSTRALASIAN SCREEN

CHAPTER 15

TEMPORAL TURBULENCE: RECEPTION STUDIES(’) NOW

Ika Willis

Studying the reception of the ancient Greek and Roman world in Australia and New Zealand (ANZ) requires us to address certain historical, political and theoretical questions that are posed here with particular sharpness, but which are, in fact, fundamental to Reception Studies more generally. Here and now, in ANZ, it is impossible for us to ignore the ways in which continuity, tradition and the past are actively constructed, not just passively received. In these modern settler colonies, as Louise D’Arcens has argued in the context of Australian medievalism, Classical Reception functions as one among many ‘colonial evocations of continuity with European and English antique tradition’, involving ‘the refusal and displacement of local traditions that were as sophisticated, and even more ancient’ (2012: 4).

As a result, it is necessary for us to draw on a model of temporality that is sufficiently complex to account for tradition, history, and the past as multiple, contested, and – in Rita Felski’s phrase, borrowed from Bruno Latour – turbulent (2011: 578). Working with turbulent temporalities, as I demonstrate in this chapter, allows us to do work that is richer and more just in three important ways: more just to the ancient texts that act across time in ways that are difficult to describe; more just to the people, cultures and societies who make active use of these texts; and more just to what Jacques Derrida calls ‘the other other’ (1995: 68), the traditions and pasts that are potentially or actually displaced by the importation of European antiquity.

Turbulent temporality

In Western Europe, the idea of a continuous line of cultural descent from ancient Greece to the present day has become so naturalized as to be almost invisible. This is exemplified – even thematized – in Simon Goldhill’s introduction to his 2004 book, *Love, Sex and Tragedy: How the Ancient World Shapes Our Lives*: ‘From the classical pillars outside the high-street bank to sweaty exercise in the gymnasium, to our very ideas of what a perfect stomach should look like, the inheritance of the ancient world is part of the very fabric of our everyday modernity.’ He goes on to refer to ‘a classical inheritance’ or ‘cultural tradition’ which ‘for centuries was the foundation of Western culture, a shared resource of the imagination’, and which his book seeks to rescue from a recent forgetting that threatens our capacity to understand our world and ourselves (2004: 2).

Goldhill's rhetoric here both emphasizes and takes for granted the metaphors of 'tradition' and 'inheritance' (the latter appears five times on page 2 alone) as the most adequate terms for describing the historical relationship between ancient Greece and contemporary Britain. These terms simultaneously indicate and obscure the actual, ongoing and active, processes by which the past is remembered, evoked, and/or appropriated in the present. For Goldhill, only the phenomenon of forgetting needs to be accounted for: the phenomena of remembering – inheriting, passing down – are adequately explained by the inherent value and power of concepts and texts from the ancient world. A different understanding of tradition – Raymond Williams' model of *selective* tradition – would suggest that we need to account for it not as 'the surviving past', but as 'an actively shaping force', 'an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification' (Williams 1977: 115).

In reality, the survival of the Classical Tradition in Western Europe is not the outcome of the 'somewhat irenic' processes evoked by Goldhill (Goff 2005: 12). Instead, it comes about through appropriation and contestation. Barbara Goff uses the concrete example of the Elgin Marbles, acquired by Lord Elgin in the early nineteenth century as part of an ongoing competition with France over ancient Greek and Roman objects (2005: 7). Britain is not the natural home of the Elgin Marbles, or the natural heir of the Classical Tradition more broadly; the Marbles, and the tradition, reached that cold northern island through a long series of often violent acts of appropriation and selection.

However, the ongoing and active processes of selection by which the Classical Tradition survives in Western Europe have, for various historical, socio-political and cultural reasons, been rendered hard to see. The same historical, socio-political and cultural reasons make those processes of selection hyper-visible when ancient Greece and Rome are not inherited, but imported, across a wide temporal and geographical gap, into the settler colonies of Australia and New Zealand, where they displace other, indigenous, histories and pasts. In ANZ, Classical Reception is visibly not the result, but the *production* – sometimes even the critical production – of a cultural and historical relationship with European antiquity.

The phenomenon of Classical Reception in ANZ is, then, a particularly rich site for exploring and analysing the processes by which specific pasts are remembered, evoked, and/or appropriated in specific present-day contexts. As noted, however, the processes of Classical Reception that we can see more clearly in ANZ are just as relevant to Classical Reception in Europe. Attending to the ways in which ANZ *visibly* selects, imports and appropriates elements of the classical past helps us also to become aware of the same processes where they are naturalized and rendered invisible.

Like the other theoretical problems I am investigating here, the problem of the temporal relation between past and present is exacerbated and made hyper-visible in the ANZ context by the history of colonialism. In his 1983 book *Time and the Other*, Johannes Fabien characterizes colonial history by, precisely, its 'denial of coevalness': the idea that non-western and/or indigenous cultures are 'primitive', 'timeless' or 'archaic' in relation to western modernity and progress (some specific examples of this in the New Zealand

context are discussed below). The post-colonial scholar Dipesh Chakrabarty radically extends this interrogation of 'coevalness' in his 2000 book, *Provincializing Europe*, which has made a major intervention into theories of history and temporality. He opens the book by critiquing the model of history that underlies the denial of coevalness: a European Enlightenment vision of history as unitary, progress-driven, forward-moving, and taking place in homogeneous, empty, secular time. This vision of history, which Chakrabarty calls 'historicism', 'enabled European domination of the world in the nineteenth century', by 'posit[ing] historical time as a measure of the cultural distance . . . between the West and the non-West' (2000: 7). Constructing history as progress, historicism consigns contemporary non-western cultures and people to the past.

But Chakrabarty's critique of the western/colonial model of history is not based solely on its ethical and political dimensions, or the consequences it has had for non-western people: rather, he demonstrates that the model of temporality as sequential is itself flawed. We cannot rescue neutral notions of 'historical consciousness' or 'historical evidence' from the colonial model of history-as-progress, for they are irreducibly intertwined, and mutually founded on a refusal to acknowledge the mixed, anachronistic nature of the present day. 'Historical evidence is produced', Chakrabarty writes:

. . . by our capacity to see something that is contemporaneous with us – ranging from practices, humans, institutions and stone-inscriptions to documents – as a relic of another time or place. The person gifted with historical consciousness sees these objects as things that once belonged to their historical context and now exist in the observer's time as a 'bit' of that past . . . The method . . . stops the subject from seeing his or her own present as discontinuous with itself.

2000: 238–9

What is radical about Chakrabarty's argument is his insistence that the *same* operation consigns contemporary humans, on the one hand, and ancient texts, on the other, to the ancient past. It is not that colonial explorers were wrong to see 'practices [and] humans' as archaic but right to see 'stone-inscriptions [and] documents' as 'a "bit" of the past'; rather, the problem is with a form of historical consciousness that prevents us from seeing the present's non-self-identity. Chakrabarty calls us to 'confron[t] the problem of the temporal heterogeneity of the "now"' (2000: 243), to 'reconceptualize the present' and to 'learn to think the present – the "now" that we inhabit as we speak – as irreducibly not-one' (2000: 249).

Following Chakrabarty, several literary theorists and Reception scholars are currently building new models of temporality not as linear but as turbulent. Turbulent temporality, writes Felski, allows us to see time not as 'a tidy sequence of partitioned units, but a profusion of whirlpools and rapids, eddies and flows, in which objects, ideas, images, and texts from different moments swirl, tumble, and collide in ever-changing combinations and constellations' (2011: 578). Along with turbulent models of temporality come new models of the 'now' in which we read and receive texts: a 'now' which is, in Chakrabarty's words, 'irreducibly not-one' (2000: 249). I have argued elsewhere that Reception Studies

requires a more complex model of ‘now’, one which is ‘produced out of . . . a constellation of times’, rather than being structured by ‘historical sequence’ (Willis 2011: 124). The Medieval scholar Carolyn Dinshaw similarly writes of ‘fostering temporalities other than the narrowly sequential’ to account for the way that ‘different time frames or temporal systems collid[e] in a single moment of *now*’, so that ‘the present moment of *now* is full and attached rather than empty and free-floating’ (2012: 4–5). There is only now – the now in which we read, access, receive and transform ancient texts – but to say this is not to deny the reality and agency of the past. Rather, it is to reconceptualize the present as not-one, the ‘now’ as a constellation of times, texts, moments and ideas, not as a singular moment purified of any trace of *other* temporalities.

Confronting the temporal heterogeneity of the ‘now’ entails a revaluation of anachronism. This is something that Chakrabarty explicitly calls for in *Provincializing Europe*, arguing that it is ‘the modern sense of “anachronism”’ that ‘stops us from confronting the problem of the temporal heterogeneity of the “now”’, and suggesting that we might, instead, ‘find anachronism productive’ (2000: 243). The revaluation of anachronism poses a particular challenge to Classical Reception Studies, which has often seen anachronism as a threat to the expertise of Classical scholars and/or to the integrity of the past. For Chakrabarty, and in the turbulent model of temporality that I am arguing for, anachronisms are not lapses in historical accuracy, measured as deviations from history’s linear sequence of distinct temporal moments. Rather, anachronism – non-heterogeneous temporality, the coevalness and connectedness of past and present – is originary: linear models of sequential time are constructed reactively to tidy away and cover over the turbulent temporalities that we in fact inhabit – as readers of ancient texts, as inhabitants of settler colonies, as time-bound human beings (see Kennedy 2013).

I want now to turn to a specific instance of Classical Reception in New Zealand to flesh out some of the historical and theoretical claims I have made so far: the television show *Xena: Warrior Princess* (hereafter *Xena*) (1995–2001), a particularly rich example of the complexities of Classical Reception in New Zealand, and of the necessity for a theory of temporal turbulence.

Xena: Warrior Princess

Xena: Warrior Princess, a spin-off from *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*, follows the visually spectacular adventures of the eponymous Xena (played by the Pākehā actor, Lucy Lawless) and her sidekick Gabrielle (the white North American actor, Renée O’Connor) through an ancient/medieval/fantasy setting described in the opening credits as ‘the time of ancient gods, warlords and kings’ and summarized by the New Zealand scholar Nick Perry as a ‘kind of tongue-in-cheek, mock Graeco-Roman/medieval/fetishistic costume drama’ (2011: 144–5). The show was filmed on location in New Zealand by Pacific Renaissance Pacific (hereafter PacRen), the New Zealand-based subsidiary of a US production company (Renaissance Pictures), and syndicated worldwide. The transnational circuits of *Xena*’s production, transmission and reception,

as well as the temporal and spatial heterogeneity of its fictional world, entail the show's participation in multiple different local and global histories.¹

This multiplicity is amply registered in *Xena's* fictional world, which is not just accidentally but structurally anachronistic. Historical and mythical figures collide and interact in ways that openly and exuberantly flaunt the show's disregard for historical sequence. The only guideline for the show's cultural/historical setting was famously laid down by producer Robert Tapert as 'everything BC is okay', but in practice the show incorporates imagery and characters from Greek, Roman, Chinese, Middle Eastern and Indian antiquity through Early Modern Europe to the contemporary United States. Over the course of the show's six seasons, Xena meets Hercules, Odysseus, Julius Caesar, King David, Krishna and Lao Tzu (or rather his wife, Lao Ma), as well as a thinly disguised Joan of Arc (the obsessed Najara in 'Crusader'). In the episode 'Athens City Academy of the Performing Bards', Homer tells 'the ancient story of Spartacus' – who, historically, lived six or seven hundred years after Homer. In 'The Play's the Thing', a new production of *Buffus the Bacchae Slayer* opens in Athens alongside Sophocles' *The Women of Trachis*, which we glimpse playing in a proscenium arch theatre: it features hundreds of scantily clad women dancers in monumental arrangements, or flying on wires, in the manner of a Busby Berkeley spectacular.

Xena's presence in Classical scholarship is marginal, even in work that centres on popular culture and/or screen media.² In Dunstan Lowe and Kim Shahabudin's *Classics for All*, half a chapter is devoted to audience responses to a single episode of *Xena* (Potter 2009); the show is mentioned in passing by Monica Cyrino and Meredith Safran (2015); and Arthur Pomeroy's introduction to his edited *Companion to Ancient Greece and Rome on Film* apologizes that the book contains 'no *Xena*' (2017: 6).

I have argued elsewhere that Classicists have not really known what to do with *Xena*, precisely because of its structural and inescapable anachronisms, its turbulent temporality. In Classical Reception scholarship generally, anachronism tends to be seen either as a necessary evil that enables a contemporary audience to relate to the ancient myth, or as a regrettable historical error that creates false beliefs about antiquity in the audience (Willis 2017). Thus, Classicists' responses to *Xena* tend either to dismiss it as irredeemably flawed (Goldhill 2004: 3), or to bracket out the contemporary and/or New Zealand elements and read it as (if it were) a retelling of ancient myth (Futrell 2003; Blondell 2005; Potter 2009). The latter responses read *Xena* in terms of its accuracy or inaccuracy, and/or for its usefulness in pointing viewers to the 'original' sources. Even Gideon Nisbet's treatment of *Xena* and its sister show, *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*, perhaps the most detailed, sophisticated and sympathetic account by a Classicist to date, evaluates the shows in relation to the 'authenticity' of their reception of ancient myth, defending the shows' anachronisms on the basis that 'a Hercules who breaks across cultural boundaries and transforms into a Roman hero is *also* an authentic Hercules' (Nisbet 2008: 58).

But thinking of anachronism in these ways simply cannot account for what *Xena* is doing with time. As several fans have pointed out, *Xena* makes no claim to historical accuracy (see, for example, *The Subversive Pomegranate*, 1999). It is hard to imagine a

viewer of *Xena* capable of taking pleasure in its camp, excessive aesthetic while simultaneously believing it to be an accurate representation of the ancient world, and thus being duped into the belief that, for example, the Eurythmics song, 'Sisters Are Doing It For Themselves' is contemporaneous with the Trojan War ('Lyre, Lyre, Hearts On Fire'). Temporal turbulence is the condition of possibility for *Xena's* fictional world, and it is powered and produced by anachronism.

Thus, if we take seriously Chakrabarty's challenge to 'find anachronism productive', and Felski's argument that, to do justice to the trans-temporal agency of texts, we must 'rethink, from the ground up, how we historicize and contextualize, and to what end' (2011: 576), then *Xena's* anachronistic setting can be seen as a resource for such a rethinking, rather than as a failure to conform to normative models of context and sequential models of history. Just such an approach to *Xena* is, as it happens, commonly taken by Cultural Studies scholars. A much-anthologized essay by Sara Gwenllian-Jones (2000) has shown that the operations of history-making (or/as myth-making) are central both to the narrative of *Xena* and to its reception. Many episodes of *Xena* foreground the act of storytelling about the past and/or suggest the existence of an alternative version of history, and hence the ultimate changeability of the past; indeed, as Nick Lowe has written:

...the fact [that *Xena*] was an invented character made her a different kind of presence in the mythological continuity: a female hero as significant in her world as Hercules, but entirely erased in the myths that have come down to us. *Xena's* presence in myth is *always* subversive of their canonical tellings.

2004: n.p.

Examples of *Xena's* subversions of myth include the episodes 'Beware Greeks Bearing Gifts', in which *Xena* helps Helen escape Troy without either Paris or Menelaus, and 'One Against an Army', where *Xena* asks Pheidippides to "run on to Athens and tell them about Marathon", advising him: "Pace yourself. In this heat, a run like that could kill you." Most significant, however, is the season two episode, 'The *Xena* Scrolls', in which it is revealed that *Xena* is based on (fictional) scrolls that record a truth suppressed by the patriarchal master-narratives of history, and which have 'the power to turn myth into history and history into myth'. Gwenllian-Jones, who reads this episode in detail in the essay cited above, writes that in such episodes:

...orthodox versions of the past are constituted as inherently unstable and incomplete, and the audience's imagination is directed toward the possibility of multiple untold histories that at any moment might resurface, like the *Xena* scrolls, to throw 'official' accounts of the past into crisis.

2000: 405

Thus, while Classicists tend to see *Xena* as an example of the retelling of the ancient past, and/or dismiss it as a failed, superficial or decontextualized retelling, Cultural

Studies scholars see it as being about the act of retelling. Revaluing anachronism makes it possible to see *Xena* as a story about the appropriation of the past, not its misapprehension. Anachronism is not, then, a matter of simple error but a potent resource for engaging with a past seen as plastic, in-process, and in ongoing dialogue with the present. Read in this way, *Xena*'s use of anachronism helps to make visible the operations of history-making and meaning-making that are inherent in all acts of Classical Reception – and, crucially, helps to make visible the participation of *multiple* pasts and presents in the processes of history-making and meaning-making.

But what are these processes, and how, as Classical Reception scholars, might we begin to do them justice? Classical Reception scholars have tended to bracket them off, black-boxing the cross-temporal networks in which *Xena* is positioned and instead reading *Xena* in the ways we are trained in, as a representation of the ancient past or a retelling of an ancient text.³ To understand the other factors that participate in *Xena*'s production of temporality, spatiality and meaning, we must turn to work by New Zealand scholars and scholars of global media production and transmission. Where Classicists have tended to see *Xena* as 'about' the ancient past, other scholars have looked for the ways in which *Xena* is (or is not) 'about' New Zealand. Symmetrically enough, just as Classicists black-box or bracket off contemporary New Zealand in their readings of *Xena* as a retelling of ancient myths, so analyses of the show's construction of New Zealand background or black-box the Classical.⁴

Xena's setting has been described by New Zealand scholars as a 'temporally and spatially indeterminate fiction' (Perry 2011: 144), a 'rural elsewhere' (Skelton 2008: 48), and a 'carefully staged nowhere' (Turner 2000: 226), with the result that the show has been seen by some post-colonial critics as having nothing to tell us about New Zealand, since the 'efficacy of its fictional landscape', as Perry writes, relies on 'an actively motivated *effacement* of New Zealand's geographical specificity' (2011: 145). Stephen Turner, similarly, has described *Xena*'s practices of place-making as 'dubbing' the New Zealand landscape, where 'dubbing' refers to the practice of 'laying down . . . a track (for example a sound-track in a film) which at once covers over and translates the original' (2000: 220).

The practice of 'dubbing' New Zealand – effacing its geographical specificity; looking at it and seeing ancient Greece – was not invented by PacRen, but has a long colonial history. In a survey of early writings by Europeans on Māori and Polynesian peoples and cultures, the New Zealand historian K. R. Howe tells us that explorers like Dumond D'Urville 'saw in "spontaneous comparison" Greek landscapes, towns and characters everywhere' (2008: 29). Howe argues that 'seeing Greek likenesses in some Pacific societies was no coincidence, but a deliberate strategy based on the idea that Pacific cultures might contain clues about Europe's own past' (2008: 30). To look at New Zealand and see ancient Greece, then, is to perpetuate a specifically colonial viewing practice – one interrogated and subverted by Marian Maguire, as discussed by Johnston and Köntges in this volume.

As Maguire's art practice also suggests, other ways of looking at landscape in *Xena* are possible. Indeed, Stephen Turner writes that 'although . . . place is dubbed or concealed on *Xena* for external consumption, it is still possible to glean local history from the

image. The place that is lived-in and not just looked-at can never be absolutely erased from an image' (2000: 226). Similarly, Gaye Naismith's essay on PacRen's local/global production processes argues that:

... while, as an offshore production company ... Pac Ren has no investment in representing 'New Zealandness' in their products, a local 'flavour' clearly permeated the production environment of *Xena* and subsequently left its mark on the broadcast series. Although not overtly expressed in the finished text, local references do retain a covert or subtextual presence there, and can be accessed by viewers possessing the necessary cultural vocabulary to decode them.

2001: 219

As Classicists, we need to learn to read *Xena* differently. This means refusing to read *Xena* as if the non-European histories it evokes and in which it participates were not as much a part of its production of meaning and its construction of history as its reception of the Classical past. Instead of effacing New Zealand and the Pacific from the show's representations, meanings, and effects, we need to look *at*, rather than *through*, the New Zealand landscape on the screen in front of us, as well as other visual elements of the show which add Pacific histories into *Xena's* turbulent mix of cultures and pasts.

The New Zealand landscape and its distinctive flora are highly recognizable throughout *Xena*, as Carolyn Skelton points out (2008: 48). Throughout the show's first four seasons, *Xena* and Gabrielle travel to 'Corinth' or 'Athens', past tall plumes of toetoe grass; Julius Caesar builds a line of crosses on the Te Henga/Bethells Beach in the season two episode, 'Destiny'; the climax of 'The Furies' (perhaps the episode most often read by Classicists) takes place at Karekare Falls. Visual representations of the New Zealand landscape itself were part of the pleasures that *Xena's* viewers found in the show, as the many websites devoted to 'New Xenaland' location-scouting and tourism attest.

Unlike the cast of another European-derived fantasy narrative filmed in New Zealand, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* trilogies (see Parry in this volume), the cast of *Xena* is racially diverse: its European-medieval-style villages are inhabited by actors and extras of Māori or Polynesian descent as well as Pākehā and white North Americans. Casting practices in *Xena* are sometimes implicitly or ambivalently racist: all the main characters (*Xena*, Gabrielle, Joxer, the Greek gods) are white, and in the first couple of seasons, Māori or Polynesian actors mainly appear as villains. *Xena's* first major antagonist, Draco, is played by an actor of Samoan descent, Jay Lagaia'a, and in the first season episode 'Death Mask', the Māori actor William Davis portrays the villainous warrior Malik, who has a 'traditional Maori topknot and neck adornment', in a performance that Carolyn Skelton reads as a 'camp performance of a Maori stereotype' which 'ambivalently reinscribes negative portrayals of the black "bogeyman" and anti-colonial freedom fighters' (2008: 54–5). As the series progresses and becomes more confident, raced casting practices become knowingly subversive, as when the Afro-Latina Cuban-American actor Gina Torres appears as a black Cleopatra in the season three episode 'The King of Assassins', or when, as the *Xena* fan Caryl-Su Micalizio writes: 'some Maori actors fill the

roles of the ostracized Centaur nation. In a deft characterization, the Centaurs are a marginalized ethnicity living in pastoral “ghettoes” outside the rural and urban centers populated by human beings’ (1998: n.p.). By the fifth season, race-blind casting sees an actor of Māori descent, Jon Bennett, playing the role of Mark Antony.

In addition to the visible presence of diverse New Zealand landscapes and people, *Xena*’s visual aesthetic – its costumes and props – employs what Gaye Naismith describes as a ‘wild mix of historical periods and cultures, mythical, indigenous and contemporary references’ (2001: 219). *Xena*’s production designer, the New Zealander Rob Gillies, the executive producer Rob Tapert, and the co-executive producer Eric Gruendeman, all refer to a ‘local’ aesthetic or style that developed in the collective work of the New Zealand designers and craftspeople employed by Pacific Renaissance; Gillies calls this style ‘nouveau-Pacific funk’ (Naismith 2001: 219). Just as the show’s narratives and characters are drawn from a wide range of geographical, cultural and historical settings, so the show’s visual design references traditional Māori hairstyles and facial tattoos alongside (for example) African cowrie shells, Celtic knotwork, a funeral statue from Madagascar and a yipwon from Papua New Guinea.⁵ *Xena*’s weapons are a European-style sword and a chakram, the latter being a circular Indian throwing weapon referenced in the Mahabharata and historically attested into the nineteenth century (*Xena*’s chakram, however, returns to her, boomerang-style and in contravention of the laws of physics). Both European sword and Indo-Aboriginal boomerang-chakram are inlaid with iconically New Zealand paua shells.

We might, then, see the operations of place-making in *Xena* not as ‘dubbing’, in Turner’s phrase, but as ‘mixing’. Just as Carolyn Dinshaw calls us to see the present moment of ‘now’ as mixed, and as ‘full and attached rather than empty and free-floating’, so we might learn to see the setting of *Xena* not as an empty ‘nowhere’, but as a turbulent, multiply attached, now/here.

***Xena*’s turbulent temporalities**

Work by New Zealand scholars on *Xena* is, as we have seen, characterized by complex and sophisticated analyses of the interpenetration of the global and the local, both in the show’s production practices and in its representation of New Zealand/elsewhere. Classicists need to develop equally complex and sophisticated approaches to the interpenetration of multiple pasts and presents in *Xena*: the challenge for us is to read *both* the ancient past (and its contemporary manifestations) *and* contemporary New Zealand (and its past history) as participating in the construction of *Xena*’s temporal and spatial setting. In order to meet this challenge, as I have already suggested, Classical Reception scholars need to expand our repertoire of methods and approaches beyond the norms of our discipline. Adam Elliott has already begun to adumbrate the productive intersections of ecocriticism and reception in a conference paper, ‘Nature Plays Itself: Location shooting as ecocritical reception’. Here, Elliott reads the 2003 Thom Andersen documentary film *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, on the appearance of the Los Angeles suburb Bunker Hill in fictional feature films. He writes:

According to Andersen, the numerous feature films shot on location in Bunker Hill are also its most valuable historical document ... [Andersen] chooses to receive the feature films not as fictional creations (as most of us surely would), but as historical and geographical records.

2011: n.p.

In the kinds of readings of *Xena* that I am envisaging here, drawing on Elliott's suggestive collocation of ecocriticism and reception, the histories and geographies of the landscapes and bodies that *Xena* records/represents would be seen as participants in its meaning-making practices. So too would the narrative forms of US/global television, Chinese wu-xia film, the ancient Greek and Roman past, the Hindu gods, and all the other traditions, pasts and presents that collide, clash and mix in *Xena*'s turbulent temporality.⁶ Borrowing from Cultural Studies, post-colonial theory, ecocriticism, Media Studies, television production history and star studies, such readings would think beyond the 'representation' and 'reception' of the ancient world and attend to the agency of the multiple actors involved in the *production* of *Xena*'s ancient/contemporary world(s).

One of those actors is the New Zealand landscape itself. Just as the Pākehā actor Lucy Lawless plays the fictional *Xena*, so (for example) Lake Wainamu 'plays' the Alcyonian lake in the season one episode, 'Mortal Beloved'. And just as a star actor's 'penumbra' – paratextual information about the star's personal life, their other roles, their broader cultural meaning – plays a significant role in the reception of their films, so we might see the 'penumbra' of meanings constellated around Lake Wainamu as contributing to the meanings we might potentially find in *Xena*.

Such reading practices will help us to do justice to the complex factors involved in *Xena*'s mixing of the contemporary New Zealand landscape with European and non-European pasts. They will not be simply celebratory. I have argued that *Xena* makes visible the operations of history-making and meaning-making, but making something visible is no guarantee that we will like what we see. As many scholars have pointed out, *Xena* has an uneasy or uneven relationship with New Zealand's colonial history. Thus, if we stop taking for granted the idea that *Xena* is (meant to be) a representation of the ancient world, and turn our attention to the active processes that underlie and determine its selection of multiple tradition(s) and past(s) from those available to it, then the first thing we might see is an absence: the absence of Pacific, and particularly Māori, histories. As noted, *Xena* meets Hercules, Lao Ma, King David and Lord Krishna, but never Maui.

Having said that, however, thinking about *Xena* in terms of its production history rather than in terms of representation and reception might lead us to some different conclusions about the work that *Xena* does at the intersection of ancient Greek and Māori stories. A *New Zealand Herald* article on the stage show *Maui: One Man Against the Gods* from 2007 claims that its producers 'can thank *Hercules* – the made-in-New-Zealand TV show – for providing them with actor Tamati Patuwai who plays Maui ... Patuwai says the stunt work he did on the *Hercules* spin-off series *Xena Warrior Princess* gave him the confidence for the aerial feats required in *Maui*' (Christian 2007: n.p.).⁷ Thus, although Maui is not represented within *Xena*, the show has done a different kind

of work, by contributing to the production of the expert body performing Maui, and leaving a trace in the representative repertoire of New Zealand theatre.

Reading *Xena* in this way – a way that centres Antipodean reception practices, seeing them as emblematic and exemplary rather than marginal, and a way which attempts to think beyond the notion of ‘representation’ common in our discipline – has two specific lessons for us as Classical Reception scholars. Firstly, to do work that is more just to the trans-temporal agency of ancient texts, we need to learn to revalue anachronism and to develop better practices for reading openly or structurally anachronistic texts. And secondly, in order to do work that is more just to the contemporary users of ancient texts, and more just to the ‘other other’, we need to rethink our emphasis on representation, and indeed our emphasis on reception, and to think about *Xena* instead in terms of *production* – that is, firstly, attending to its production history, which can, in turn, enable us to identify as many as possible of the multiple agents contributing to its production of mixed spaces and times, never forgetting to ask who is being centred and who is being left out of the selective tradition that every text constructs for itself.

Produced by a US company, circulated for a global audience and broadly conforming to the visual and narrative conventions of global series TV, *Xena*’s anachronism and anachronism foreground the interrelated practices of history-making and place-making in global post- (or neo-) colonialism. In *Xena*, ‘different time frames or temporal systems collid[e]’; ‘objects, ideas, images, and texts from different moments swirl, tumble, and collide in ever-changing combinations and constellations’. Looking *at* rather than *through* *Xena*’s New Zealand setting, we can find in its ‘carefully staged nowhere’ a mixed ‘now’ and a globalized ‘here’: in its anachronistic and anachronistic practices of Classical Reception, we can see the workings of the turbulent temporality which – for better or for worse – opens up the reading of all past texts.

CHAPTER 16

CLASSICAL EPIC IN PETER JACKSON'S MIDDLE-EARTH TRILOGIES

Hannah Parry

Introduction

Upon the publication of *The Return of the King* (1955), the third volume of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (1954–5), W. H. Auden wrote a glowing review that concluded: 'the demands made on the writer's powers in an epic as long as *The Lord of the Rings* are enormous ... but I can only say that Mr. Tolkien has proved equal to them' (1956: n.p.). The term 'epic', in all its various manifestations, has been frequently applied to Tolkien's books since, but has rarely been overtly examined; in contemporary parlance, after all, an 'epic' can simply mean a very long book. However, Tolkien's books are 'unquestionably heir to Western epic traditions, both classical and medieval-vernacular' (Huttar 2008: 3), and critics such as Charles Huttar (1974), Kenneth Reckford (1988), Robert Morse (1986) and J. K. Newman (2005) have worked to establish *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy as works of Classical Reception. Though his main academic pursuits were Germanic, Celtic and Icelandic saga, Tolkien was 'brought up in the Classics', describing himself as having 'first discovered the sensation of literary pleasure in Homer' (Tolkien 1981: 172). Alongside the more commonly recognized influences, distinct ingredients of classical epic – particularly, as both Morse and Reckford contend, of Virgil – can be found in what Tolkien called the 'soup' of his stories.

More than forty-five years after the publication of Tolkien's trilogy, New Zealand filmmaker Peter Jackson released *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), the first in his own trilogy of cinematic adaptations of Tolkien's works. Previously known for his low-budget splatter films (*Bad Taste*, 1987; *Braindead*, 1992), his Academy Award-nominated drama of Christchurch's Parker-Hulme murder case (*Heavenly Creatures*, 1994), and his mockumentary on a fictional New Zealand film director (*Forgotten Silver*, 1995), Jackson shot the trilogy in locations across New Zealand, working with Wellington-based special effects company Weta Workshop. The films were a critical and commercial phenomenon, and instantly aligned New Zealand with Tolkien's Middle-earth in popular imagination. Like their source material, Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001–3) and later *The Hobbit* trilogy (2012–14) are consistently hailed as 'epics' by press, critics and filmmakers (see Mathjis 2006: 58–62). Jane Chance, in fact, describes Jackson's films as pure epic in contrast to what she sees as Tolkien's 'anti-epic', bringing 'to the forefront the epic battles in the War of the Ring that Tolkien ... uses only as background to the drama of the ennoblement of the Hobbits' (2004: 191). From the spectacular opening of *The Fellowship*

of the *Ring* (2001), which introduces the battle-heavy history of the Ring, the films emphasize the material of Tolkien's books that most obviously accords with the epic tradition; namely, that which 'glorifies the deeds and destinies of great heroes' (Griffin 2010: 13).¹

The cinematic epic is of course a tradition in its own right, and when critics refer to films as such, they do not usually intend to imply that the films have classical roots – though, as Joanna Paul's *Film and the Classical Epic Tradition* analyses, there is certainly real potential for the two traditions to overlap.² Neither Jackson nor the films' co-writers, Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens, have a background in Classics, and there is no evidence they had Homer or Virgil in mind when adapting Tolkien's texts. Yet in adapting a text partly influenced by classical epic into an epic of a different kind, the filmmakers engage in an act of Classical Reception, adapting classical themes and motifs for a new audience and a new medium. Like Tolkien, and like Virgil before him, Jackson becomes a participant in an epic tradition: a tradition that by its very nature involves 'refer[ring] back to and revis[ing] what went before' (Bates 2010: ix).

Considering the Middle-earth film trilogies in the light of classical epic becomes particularly interesting given the nationalistic component of the epic tradition. Greek and Roman epics are communal works that espouse communal values (Toohey 2010: 34), and the idea of the epic as national text is prominent throughout history: the *Aeneid* is designed to provide an aetiological myth for Virgil's Rome. In a foreword to Ian Brodie's *Lord of the Rings Location Guidebook*, Jackson describes the decision to locate Tolkien's world in New Zealand as rooted in his imaginative experience of the books:

Eighteen years old and reading J. R. R. Tolkien for the first time, I was sitting on a train as it left Wellington and rumbled up through the North Island. During the twelve-hour journey, I'd lift my eyes from the book and look at the familiar landscape – which all of a sudden looked like Middle-earth ... There was never any question the film wouldn't be made here.

2003: 6

This practice of overlaying the mythological past of another culture (albeit an invented one) on top of the New Zealand landscape has strong echoes in colonial history. Ika Willis discusses elsewhere in this volume the effect of the television drama *Xena: Warrior Princess* imposing European stories and locations upon contemporary New Zealand, and links it to early colonial writers who 'saw in "spontaneous comparison" Greek landscapes, towns and characters everywhere' (Howe, cited in Willis 2019: 217). Here, the local landscape is familiar to Wellington-born Jackson, and his overlaying of myth works to exoticize the scenery rather than render it understandable. Yet his association of New Zealand with the mythic past, so heavily capitalized on by Tourism New Zealand's subsequent campaigns, echoes these colonial explorers' 'idea that Pacific cultures might contain clues about Europe's own past. These explorers were time travellers into their own origins' (Howe, cited in Willis 2019: 323). The association is expressed even more explicitly by British production designer Alan Lee:

While [Tolkien's] love of England may have been the foundation stone of Middle-earth, we didn't believe we would find there . . . a landscape that was not so steeped in its own history that it could serve as the background for his epic. . . .

[New Zealand is] a young land, primeval in places . . . I can imagine Britain in a much earlier age . . . might have had a similar quality.

2003: 15, 19

Britain, in other words, is unsuitable for a Middle-earth epic because it is too steeped in epic material of its own; New Zealand, 'lacking the accumulated and overlaid evidence of thousands of years of habitation' (Lee 2003: 25), can suggest not only a Britain of the past, but a Britain of a past that never actually existed. Ironically, even rare criticism of Jackson's decision not to shoot England centres precisely on this idea of New Zealand as a place without history: 'The problem with New Zealand', critic Ed Power argues, 'is that it is decidedly young – both geologically and as a place inhabited by people. It simply does not transmit the requisite aura of decay [described in Tolkien's books]' (2013: n.p.).

The association of New Zealand with a lack of history is problematic, echoing colonial poets' attempts to erase Māori history from the country by dubbing it 'a land without a past' (William Pember Reeves, 'A Colonist in his Garden'). This is not to suggest that Jackson or his crew are disrespectful of Māori ties to the land: the crews of both trilogies were publicly dedicated to engaging with local iwi (Māori 'nation' groups) during filming, with location manager Jared Connon explaining the Māori ethos of *kaitiakitanga* (treading lightly on the land so it can be bequeathed to future generations) on Tourism New Zealand's website (Tourism New Zealand, n.d.). In fact, the films' publicity stresses New Zealand's mythological status specifically by emphasizing Māori culture and mythology. Brodie's *Location Guidebook* contains a guide to Māori legends (termed 'New Zealand's mythology'), reinforcing the idea of New Zealand as a land steeped in myth and magic. Yet there is also something at once fascinating and disconcerting in the way Brodie's book, and New Zealand tourism in general, discusses locations' associations with Middle-earth alongside those of Māori culture as though both bear the same historical weight. The combination of a lack of European history with the resonances of Polynesian myth and heritage seems to transform the New Zealand landscape into a canvas on which classical and European mythology can be imaginatively transcribed.

In this, as in other regards, Jackson's films also reference another kind of epic: the Hollywood cinematic epic. Elsewhere, Jackson has praised the New Zealand scenery for its ability to give 'the film that kind of epic John Ford Western quality of tiny figures in this big landscape' (cited Jones 2006: 291). In his discussion of the transposing of Middle-earth onto New Zealand, Stan Jones refers to what he calls the 'fear of "pastlessness" that motivates the Hollywood epic and arises from a fundamental aspect of the national identity of the US' (2006: 296). While primary epic acts as an oral 'book of the tribe' (Merchant 1971: 21), serving at once as a transmission of custom and tradition and a means to glorify the ancestors of the audience, certain kinds of cinematic epic work to

manufacture tradition for a nation that fears its own lack of a (white European) past. The imposition of story upon a contemporary landscape, as seen in the historical dramas of John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956) or *How the West Was Won* (1962), creates an artificial mythology associated with that landscape.

In an interesting echo, Tolkien's own original purpose in inventing Middle-earth was to create a 'mythology for England', a response to what he saw as the 'poverty of my own beloved country: it had no stories of its own . . . not of the quality that I sought, and found (as an ingredient) in legends of other lands' (Tolkien 1981: 144). This quality, which he found in 'Greek, and Celtic, and Romance, Germanic, Scandinavian, and Finnish' legends, he describes as 'bound up with [the country's] tongue and soil' (144); and, indeed, much of the geography ('soil') of Middle-earth corresponds to contemporary Britain and Europe. In his creation of a mythic past inscribed upon the landscape of his own 'pastless' country, Tolkien mirrors not only the creators of Hollywood epics but also Virgil, whose *Aeneid* seeks to create an origin myth for Rome. He also mirrors – or, rather, is mirrored by – Jackson. If Tolkien's conception of Middle-earth is born from his 'love of England', constructed from 'a combination of memories of places he'd known and the mythical lands he encountered during his studies of ancient texts' (Lee 2003: 15), Jackson's can be traced to the same combination of love of country, memories of familiar landscapes and readings of mythology – this time, Tolkien's own. A text that originated as an invented aetiological myth for England has been reimagined by Jackson into what Jones suggests has the potential to become a 'national epic' for New Zealand (2006: 297).

The question of whether Jackson's Middle-earth trilogies finally constitute an epic in themselves, much less a national or even 'historical' (Jones 2006: 297) epic is too wide for this chapter. I do, however, want to examine the ways in which Jackson takes up the strands of specifically classical epic that can be found woven throughout Tolkien's text. In particular, I want to suggest some of the ways in which the films' interest in heroism and in the passing of an age might constitute a heroic code for New Zealand that engages, via Tolkien, with classical values.

Tolkien, Jackson and epic heroism

New Zealand is not likely to be seen as suffering from the mythological poverty that Tolkien saw in England, steeped as it is in Māori-Pasifika legend and culture. Yet New Zealand noticeably lacks a national epic tradition, such as Homer established, Virgil appropriated for Rome, and other western writers (most notably Milton, through *Paradise Lost*) have adopted for their own countries. Māori and Pākehā writers have certainly made use of heroes from classical epic in other literary forms; the epic form, too, has very occasionally been adopted in New Zealand poetry. An early example is settler poet William Golder's 1860 epic 'The New Zealand Survey', whose five cantos each mark a stage in the development of New Zealand as a landmass. The New Zealand landscape is as central to Golder's vision as it would later be to Jackson's: the poet contemplates the majesty of the Hutt River scenery and calls upon the Muse to help him

'trace their causes, from th' effects produced?—/All stereotyped, and stamped indelibly/ On Nature's ample page!' (9–11). In the wake of Ezra Pound's *Cantos* (1925) and T. S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* (1922), the 1930s brought *Dominion* (1938), A. R. D. Fairburn's 'fragmentary and polemical epic' (Armstrong 2005: 33), and *The Book of Nadath*, Robin Hyde's 'socio-historical epic poem' (Leggott 2003: 23). Both are intensely political, exploring and criticizing contemporary social realities in New Zealand.

While these three poems participate in an epic tradition, however, none are heroic epic in the classical sense: none deal with what Griffin, paraphrasing Hesiod's *Theogony*, describes as the subject of Greek epic, 'the glorious deeds of men of old and the blessed gods who inhabit Olympus' (2010: 16). Despite the invocation to the Muse, Miltonic register and epic themes of civilization and nation-building, Golder's poem is what Brian Opie terms an epic of science, with no heroic or divine figures (2004: 60). Fairburn and Hyde use the epic to criticize national agendas rather than embody a heroic code, and do so via images and lyricism rather than the deeds of a particular heroic figure (though Hyde's poem does have a central figure in the form of the false poet Nadath). Jackson's films, by contrast, are interested in epic heroism; and, as per Tolkien, in particular variants of heroism that have classical precedent.

To understand the alterations Jackson has made to the original text, it is necessary to briefly outline Tolkien's engagement with classical heroism. Though Tolkien's professed philological and mythological interest in the Classics was in Ancient Greek, particularly Homer, the classical strain found in his books is primarily Virgilian: both, according to Reckford, in the way it honours a form of *pietas*, and in its corresponding emphasis of loss, grief and reverence for the past (Reckford 88: 175–6). The *Aeneid* depicts a world in which the old Homeric heroism, exemplified by Troy itself and by characters such as Turnus and Camilla, must regrettably pass away; Aeneas, with his steadfast *pietas* and self-sacrifice, represents a new form of heroism that sets the tone for the age that will follow and ultimately results in the foundation of Virgil's Rome. *The Lord of the Rings* follows this model: an epic about the ending of epic, it tells the story of the passing of the Third Age of Middle-earth, brought about by the quiet heroism of Aeneas-like figures such as Aragorn and, less obviously, Frodo Baggins. In the process, heroes who adhere to a code more akin to Homeric *kleos* must either die or relinquish their heroic roles.³

Jackson, by contrast, is far more comfortable with these elements of Tolkien's books that evoke Homeric martial heroism, and its focus on great deeds of arms, *kleos* and revenge. Conversely, aspects of Tolkien's code relating to Virgilian *pietas* – particularly the idea of duty to one's people and family over personal feeling – are viewed with more suspicion in the Middle-earth films than in Tolkien's books. Both books and films are concerned with the conflict between Homeric individual heroism and Virgilian social heroism that the *Aeneid* also dramatizes; yet the films have their own heroic code, which often undermines Tolkien's classical argument.

To illustrate this, I want to examine in some detail the films' treatment of the characters Boromir and Faramir. Despite being relatively minor characters, these two brothers carry a good deal of thematic weight in Tolkien's books, presenting contrasting versions of

classical heroism that illustrate the moral vision of *The Lord of the Rings*. Boromir and Faramir are the sons of the Steward of Gondor, from Minas Tirith, a city that has indirect roots in the classical world: Tolkien describes Minas Tirith as being located at ‘about the latitude of Florence’, with the mouth of the river Anduin ‘at about the latitude of ancient Troy’ (Tolkien 1981: 376).

Boromir, the elder son, joins the Fellowship of the Ring at Rivendell. However, while the rest of the Fellowship are determined to destroy the One Ring, and in the process destroy the Dark Lord Sauron, Boromir is tempted by its power, and ultimately falls prey to its corrupting influence. He attempts to take the Ring from Frodo by force, and is shortly afterwards killed by a party of Orcs. Though Boromir’s temptation, fall and redemption is essentially a Christian narrative, in keeping with Tolkien’s strong Catholic beliefs, Boromir himself draws from ‘pagan’ traditions, among them those of Homeric epic. His heroism, unique among the members of the Fellowship, has its basis in martial prowess. He is a valued captain among his own people, desirous of both ‘the victory of Minas Tirith’ and ‘his own glory therein’ (Tolkien 1954; 1995: 656): his insistence that the deeds of the men of Gondor be known and spoken of by “those who shelter behind us giv[ing] us praise” (Tolkien 1954; 1995: 239) exemplifies classical *kleos*. (In contrast, for the more Virgilian or Christian Aragorn, protection must be secret and unpraised for those they protect to be “free from care and fear” (Tolkien 1954; 1995: 242). As Reckford (1974: 63) suggests, Boromir’s heroic qualities ally him with figures such as Achilles, characterized by skill in war and public affairs, desire for fame and glory, and pride in his own skills. Yet he is not, like Achilles, one in a world in which such heroism is apt but rather one like Turnus, the self-styled ‘Achilles’ of the *Aeneid* (9.990) – a hero in a world in which such heroism is admirable but inadequate, and ultimately dangerous (Reckford 1974: 63). As such, like Turnus, Boromir finally succumbs to *furor*, and brings about his downfall in the process (Reckford 1988: 175). For both Virgil and Tolkien, this downfall implies a criticism of the Homeric heroism their characters embody: as a Homeric hero in a world that has moved beyond Homeric heroism, Boromir, like Turnus, is doomed to die.

Jackson’s films retain the image of Boromir as a Homeric hero, as they do his tragic fall, but for Jackson the Homeric aspects of this heroism are far less problematic. Indeed, his martial heroism is continually emphasized through additions to the book, and made sympathetic by being linked to protection of the smaller Hobbits. He teaches Merry and Pippin to fight with a sword, helps rescue Frodo from the Watcher in the Water, and carries Frodo to safety from the Mines of Moria. As in the book, Aragorn takes the role of Christian (and at times Virgilian) hero while Boromir inhabits the Homeric sphere, but the result is no longer that Boromir is lesser than Aragorn but that he is more human, and more likeable. Chance argues that in the film ‘it is Boromir, not the sentimental Aragorn, who shines most brightly’ (2004: 182).⁴

When Boromir in the film does succumb to the temptation of the Ring, he does so not from a Homeric desire for public honour, but through desires more reminiscent of Aeneas than Achilles or Turnus. Tolkien’s Boromir, under the grip of the Ring, argues for its use in Homeric terms of personal glory:

'The fearless, the ruthless, these alone will achieve victory. What could not a warrior do in this hour, a great leader? . . . The Ring would give me the power of Command. How I would drive the hosts of Mordor, and all men flock to my banner!'

Tolkien 1954; 1995: 389

Jackson's Boromir, by contrast, 'ask[s] only for the strength to defend [his] people' (2001). Moreover, in *The Two Towers*, Boromir is revealed to be acting on a command from his father Denethor to bring the Ring to Gondor, a command Boromir protests but reluctantly agrees to honour. Boromir's fall no longer takes place because of his need for *kleos*, but through his harmful desire to fulfil his duty to his people and to his own father – a desire that may be characterized as exemplary *pietas*.

Jackson then shifts the focus of Boromir's death from a tragic fall to a celebration of Boromir's martial heroism. Tolkien, in fact, does not depict Boromir's final battle at all. *The Fellowship of the Ring* leaves him calling, unheard, for Frodo's forgiveness as Frodo flees his 'mad fierce face . . . and his burning eyes' (Tolkien 1954; 1995: 391); in the opening pages of *The Two Towers*, Aragorn finds Boromir 'pierced with many arrows' (Tolkien 1954; 1995: 403), and Merry and Pippin captured. As a result, our immediate impression is that Boromir's death is tragic rather than glorious; a result of – and a redemption for – his attempt to take the Ring. Boromir himself, as he dies, confesses his attack on Frodo, and adds, "I am sorry. I have paid" (Tolkien 1954; 1995: 404). Jackson's depiction of Boromir's final battle takes upwards of six minutes. The combination of intense close-ups and sweeping wide shots emphasizes Boromir's position as one man against hordes of enemies, and Boromir is shown, in slow motion against swelling music, killing many of these enemies even as he is repeatedly shot by arrows. The reaction shots of Merry and Pippin as he fights frame his actions as public and honoured, as Tolkien's Boromir desired. It is on this, rather than on his punishment for succumbing to *furor*, that the film dwells.

These changes are mirrored by Boromir's younger brother Faramir, who in Tolkien's book serves as an example of Virgilian *pietas*. Tolkien's Faramir is essentially an Aeneas figure in contrast to his brother, characterized by the 'virtue, duty, loyalty, responsibility – duty to one's family, to one's people, and to the gods' (Jenkyns 1992: 56) that forms the basis of Virgilian heroism. Faramir goes into battle motivated 'not . . . by his own choosing' (Tolkien 1954; 1995: 798) but by his duty to his father and city, just as 'it is not [Aeneas'] own free will' (*Aeneid* 4.492) but his duty to the gods and his son that finally sends him to Italy. His reverence toward his ancestors and the mythic past is stressed by his observance of obliquely spiritual rituals not seen elsewhere (Tolkien 1954; 1995: 661). Faramir also shares with Aeneas an affinity for dreams and visions: he first receives the prophetic vision that ultimately sends Boromir to Rivendell, and he later receives a vision of Boromir after his death that mirrors the vision of Hector Aeneas receives at Troy. His *pietas* ultimately enables him to resist the Ring, and provide the aid to Frodo and Sam that his brother could not.

By contrast, Jackson's Faramir, like his Boromir, attempts to take the Ring to Gondor by force – precisely because of his desire to do his duty by his country. Sam's appeal for his help is interrupted by a reminder of Faramir's social position and responsibilities: a

messenger twice interrupts Sam, first informing Faramir, “My lord, Osgiliath is under attack”, then repeating his title, “Captain Faramir?” (Jackson 2003). His refusal to help the Hobbits is framed as a fulfilment of these responsibilities: “The Ring will go to Gondor.” When Faramir does release the Hobbits – after overhearing Sam give a speech about the importance for fighting for the “good in this world” – it is explicitly a rejection of this double duty to people and family. “You know the laws of your country – the laws of your father”, his lieutenant urges him, only for Faramir to reply, “Then [my life] is forfeit. Release them” (Jackson 2002). Once again, Jackson’s films emphasize a nationalistic interpretation of *pietas* to warn against the dangers of its most literal interpretation: that of ‘looking out for your own’ at the cost of others, and of your own honour.

This warning comes to pervade Jackson’s depiction of Tolkien’s world, and to characterize Jackson’s approach to epic heroism. Judith Kollman notes that the films have a ‘significant theme . . . of peoples who desire to avoid war for parochial reasons’ (2004: 159). Consistently, plotlines added to the films stress leaders’ harmful desires to protect their own land and people, while others urge them to call for help or send aid to their allies. King Theoden refuses to call for aid at Helm’s Deep, only to receive it from Elrond. Denethor, in turn, refuses to light the beacons that will summon Theoden to help them, prompting Pippin to light them himself in one of *The Return of the King*’s most spectacular set-pieces. Treebeard and the Ents initially refuse to aid the war by attacking Orthanc: ““This is not our war”, Treebeard tells Merry, to which he retorts, ““But you’re part of this world!”” (Jackson 2002). The importance of this statement to Jackson’s team can be seen by its reappearance in *The Hobbit* trilogy, which devotes an invented subplot to the Elven King’s attempt to isolate his kingdom from the coming conflict on the grounds that ““other lands are not my concern”. Tauriel, Captain of the Guards, urges him and then his son to involve themselves in stopping the spread of ‘evil’, arguing in a close echo of Merry that ““it is our fight . . . Are we not a part of this world?”” (Jackson 2013).

In some ways, this heroic code seems paradoxical: the epic tradition is, after all, strongly tied to nationalism, and yet Jackson’s films emphasize the book’s epic elements only to reconfigure them as an argument *against* nationalism. It is possible, however, to read this emphasis on being part of a wider world, and of choosing to honour allegiances to others in times of need, as one of the many ways in which Jackson has altered the story to become a national epic for New Zealand. The films’ concerns about parochialism, coupled with their Homeric admiration of individual heroism, find echoes within New Zealand’s identity as a small, isolated country within a much wider global playing field. In a scene that closely resembles arguments against New Zealand involvement in foreign conflicts, Pippin reminds Merry that the War of the Ring does not directly affect their own homeland:

[Pippin:] ‘It’s too big for us. What can we do in the end? We’ve got the Shire.
Maybe we should go home.’

[Merry:] ‘The fires of Isengard will spread. And the woods of Tookborough and Buckland will burn. And, and all that was once green and good in this world will be gone. There won’t be a Shire, Pippin.’

Jackson 2002

The Hobbits' home country of the Shire is closely aligned with Tolkien's own England, located 'at about the latitude of Oxford' (Tolkien 1981: 376); in Jackson's films, it is filmed in the Waikato, its green fields and surrounding trees epitomizing New Zealand's rural image. It is, like New Zealand, geographically isolated from the wider world in times of war; while Tolkien's books finally show war coming even to the Shire, the end of the films shows the Hobbits' return to a home still thriving and unaltered. Yet Merry's reference to "all that was once green and good in this world" foreshadows Sam's affirmation in the same film that "there's some good in this world . . . worth fighting for" (Jackson 2002) – the same affirmation, not coincidentally, that occasions Faramir's rejection of his father's nationalistic understanding of Virgilian *pietas*. 'This world,' Sam's monologue and the ethos of the film insists, is wider than that, and even small places – or countries – must play their part in it.

The ending of epic

If Jackson revises Tolkien's engagement with Virgilian *pietas*, he upholds its engagement with Virgilian *lacrimae rerum*. Where Jackson's films mirror Virgil is also where Tolkien's books do so most closely: in their final depiction of the passing of an age, and in what Reckford terms (speaking of both Virgil and Tolkien) the balance between the glorification of great 'virtues and achievements against the "tears of things", the accumulated loss and sadness of men and women who live, suffer, and die upon this middle-earth' (1988: 176). Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* may be an epic, but it is also about the passing of epic: at the close of the book, Frodo, Gandalf and the Elves depart over the seas, 'for the Third Age was over, and the Days of the Rings were passed, and an end was come of the story and song of those times' (Tolkien 1955; 1995: 1006). In this, it mirrors the *Aeneid*, which also sees the birth of a new age at the expense of the old, Homeric world, and of the hero who helped bring it about. Aeneas surrenders his future happiness in Carthage so that his 'own heir' (4.68) Ascanius would have the 'realm of Italy and the land of Rome' (4.369); he himself, we are told, will not live to enjoy it. Frodo, likewise, finds that he must 'lose [the Shire] so others may keep it' (Tolkien 1955; 1995: 1006) and departs with the ship into the West after naming Sam his heir and leaving him 'all that [he] had and might have had' (1006). The strong implication is that Middle-earth is passing into what will become Tolkien's England, as the end of *Aeneid* passes into what will become Virgil's Rome.

For all its glorification of Homeric-style battle scenes, the ending of *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy retains this quiet emphasis on sacrifice and loss. If *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001) opens with an epic battle, it also opens with an acknowledgement, through Galadriel's voice-over, that the epic world it is depicting is one that has already passed away: "The world is changed. I feel it in the water, I feel it in the earth, I smell it in the air. Much that once was is lost, for none now live who remember it." The end of the war finally sees the bitter-sweet end of not only the evil of the old world, but the good, as with the Fourth Age of Middle-earth, "the Fellowship of the Ring, though eternally bound by

friendship and love, was ended” (Jackson 2003). The film, like the book, ultimately moves away from the epic to the domestic, as Frodo, Gandalf and the Elves depart from the world and Sam returns home to his children.

If this domestic world implies the loss of epic, however, the emphasis on family and continuity – Frodo’s assertion that “[Sam’s] part in the tale will go on” (Jackson 2003) – implies that its memory, contrary to Galadriel’s opening statement, will be kept alive. In this way, Jackson reconciles his own interest in personal glory and friendship with Virgil’s sense of national history: glory, after all, entails not only public honour but immortality through memory. It also situates the films clearly in a world that has already passed away, but that remains relevant to the present world. This emphasis on memory can perhaps be seen most clearly in Jackson’s more recent *The Hobbit* trilogy. Jackson’s version of the story is framed by Bilbo’s memories, recorded for Frodo; Thranduil is haunted by the murder of his wife, of whom he has allowed “no grave, no memory” (Jackson 2014); the wood-elves are heard celebrating the festival of starlight, which is ‘memory, precious and pure’ (Jackson 2013); almost the last lines of the trilogy focus on the memory of the dead Thorin, whom Bilbo chooses to remember as his friend. In Jackson’s mythology, as in Tolkien’s, in Virgil’s, and in Homer’s, ‘the honourable finds its due/and there are tears for passing things’ (*Aeneid* 1.654–5).

It is this sense that the films are taking place not in an imaginary land, but in a forgotten past linked through the landscape with modern-day New Zealand, which perhaps gives the most weight to Jones’ characterization of the films as a national and historical epic. If colonial writers who infused the New Zealand landscape with classical myth were ‘time-travellers into their own histories’, then Jackson, like Tolkien, infuses the New Zealand landscape with an invented mythology that becomes an artificial history for New Zealand and an exploration of how it might navigate its own classical heroic code. In one of *The Battle of the Five Armies*’ more beautiful scenes, Bilbo is discovered by Thorin holding not the Arkenstone, the sought-after symbol of the dwarves’ wealth and glory, but an acorn. “One day it’ll grow,” he explains. “And every time I look at it, I’ll remember. Remember everything that happened: the good, the bad . . . and how lucky I am that I made it home” (Jackson 2014). In his essay ‘Some Trees in Virgil and Tolkien’, Reckford argues that there is a ‘deep affinity’ between Virgil’s mind and Tolkien’s, especially in the way they perceive the relation between heroic choice and achievement on the one hand; and time, loss, sadness, uncertainty, and suffering on the other. ‘Or’, as he puts it, ‘more poetically, the way they look at trees’ (57–8). As Reckford argues, the various trees that appear in both Virgil and Tolkien embody both the promise of continuity, and ‘the power of time to ravish beauty, undo man’s works, and carry into memory and song (or the Far West) all that we cherish and fight for in our brief lives’ (60). To these trees – among them the White Tree of Gondor, the laurel tree in Latinus’ palace, and the ash tree with which Aeneas compares the fall of Troy – Jackson adds Bilbo’s, and endows it with the same bitter-sweet connotations of growth, loss, triumph, love of homeland and memory that characterize classical epic. He also plants those trees in New Zealand farmland, surrounded by native bush, mountains and streams.

CHAPTER 17

SHIFTING PARADIGMS IN BEN FERRIS' *PENELOPE*

Leanne Glass

Film is a visual art form that is fluid in its ability to extend beyond the borders of the written word. The Australian director and Classicist, Ben Ferris, embraces this aspect of filmmaking in his debut feature film, *Penelope* (2009). Based on Homer's heroine who faithfully waits twenty years for her husband, Odysseus, to return from the Trojan War, Penelope is the pinnacle of patient, wifely virtue. She is an archetype created to meet the expectations of an ancient, patriarchal culture. But in a post-feminist society, she continues to maintain a symbolic dignity that, at times, seems impossible to shift. James Joyce recognized this anomaly. In *Ulysses*, Penelope is re-imagined as Molly Bloom whose adultery stands in stark contrast to her ancient counterpart's faithfulness. Inspired by the *Odyssey* and *Ulysses*, Ferris' interpretation returns Penelope to her archetypal self but questions the effectiveness of upholding her admirable traits. Conveying her story via the film's mainly visual and perplexing narrative, he uses her association with sleep and dreams to reconsider the implications of female isolation and vulnerability during times of war.

This theme becomes increasingly clear as the film's veneer is erased to expose the ugly truth of conflict and invasion. Filmed in Croatia, a Balkan state that was embroiled in the Bosnian War (1992–5), the meta-narrative of Ferris' *Penelope* reveals the plight of women (and men) at the hands of Serbian forces during the military crisis. For many of its victims and their families, the effects of this war remain unresolved, and although their suffering is generally not at the forefront of the Australasian consciousness, Ferris' unique, cinematic reading adds an Antipodean awareness to their struggle. That said, however, his interest in her story coincides with other works. To begin, therefore, attention is drawn to Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005) and Jane Rawlings' *The Penelopeia: A Novel in Verse* (2003) to position the film within contemporaneous reception trends.

Atwood's novella commences with the recognition that the mythic process is a fictional genre that is open to interpretation. Her Penelope, who is dead and resides in the Underworld, is cynical of the tales that have been spun about her and is keen to regale her version: 'Now that all the others have run out of air, it's my turn to do a little story-making' (2005: 3). Her statement conjures themes associated with waiting, speech, expiration (or death), truth and fiction. She would like to believe that '*Now that I'm dead I know everything*' (1) but the reality is her wish for all knowledge is unfulfilled. This gap in knowing is an aspect of Penelope's story that encourages alternative ways of viewing her tale in creative reception practices (Hall 2008: 120). Accordingly, Penelope's voice is

representative of a feminist discourse that questions the legitimacy of Homer's telling. But in her desire to 'truthfully' expound on her prudent and resourceful epithets, Penelope is found to be neither faultless nor blameless. She is a dead woman talking and this distinctive view of her situation poses only one question: is anyone even listening?

In *The Penelopeia*, Rawlings takes a different approach. In this telling, Penelope's reputation as Odysseus' faithful wife ensures she is treated with respect and goodwill from those she meets as she journeys with her twin daughters to the Pythian Oracle. Delivered in unrhymed verse, her story could be considered a sequel to the *Odyssey*, but from a female perspective. Rawlings does not place doubt on Homer's rendition but suggests there is more to tell, as evidenced by the birth of Odysseus' daughters during his absence. Closeted from view for many years and with exceptionally limited social and familial contact (even Telemachus did not know of their existence), the twins' unexpected presence fills an unknown void or 'omission' in Homer's version of events. This narrative turn, however, creates more space than Penelope's daughters' physicality can satiate because their introduction questions the veracity of Penelope's story and her reputation as the faithful wife.

The desire by both authors to question the legitimacy of Penelope's archetypal crown are feminist responses that push her beyond the familiar into new territories, and towards the final frontier of death. This last symbolic gesture is significant because its meaning is tied to Penelope's passing as a Homeric character: she is in the past; what she represents is in the past; her iconic status has passed. She is void. Here, Atwood's reading of Penelope is pointed, and it reveals the reason feminist writers are drawn to the gaps in Homer's telling of Penelope's story. By giving her a voice, creative reception practitioners provide Penelope with the freedom to be an 'other' version of her archetypal self who is unbound by patriarchal constraints and whose story resonates with contemporary gendered shifts.

A counterpoint to Atwood's and Rawlings' creative responses, Joyce's Penelopean character introduces a different perspective on Homer's heroine. Joyce's retelling of Homer's *Odyssey* focuses on a day in the life of Leopold Bloom as he returns home to his wife, Molly. Based in early twentieth-century Dublin and with anti-war undertones, the novel challenges *Odyssean* hierarchical notions of Greek myth and narrative structure in favour of an exploration of the everyday man and woman as they traverse the complexities of life. Crude, explicit, libidinous, faithless and self-absorbed, Molly is the antithesis of Homer's Penelope. Molly's seemingly endless array of thoughts combined with her earthy attitude deride her status as a modern Homeric archetype. Once considered an unacceptable example of morality and femininity (Clayton 2004: 87–8; Hall 2008: 9, 195–7), Molly sheds light on the hypocrisy of socio-cultural gender divides and rejects the role of just another Penelopean model of modesty and restraint (Joyce 1922; 2000: 871–2); indeed, she is neither cynical nor left wanting but rather a paradigm of honest womanhood.

The feminist responses of Atwood, Rawlings and Joyce push the boundaries of Homer's tale, giving their Penelopes all the words they can muster to ensure their story – their 'truth' – is spoken. But what if Penelope were mute? What if she were unable to speak out? From the feminist to the feminine, Ferris focuses on the silence in the *Odyssey*

and returns Penelope to the space of the virtuous and faithful wife as she waits for her husband to return from war. His cinematic reading sets aside the post-feminist debate and instead places doubt on whether her renown is enough to deflect the extremes of conflict and invasion. In this way, the film accepts that many Penelopes exist; that real women who are honest, faithful and wise *will wait* for their husbands to return home, regardless of their flaws. *This is a truth*. From this perspective, we can see the honesty of Molly subtly influencing the film's interpretation but, unlike her Joycean counterpart, Ferris' Penelope is not a model of female empowerment; rather, she is a woman whose plight encourages sympathy and support. The anti-war undertones of *Ulysses* inform Ferris' filmic reception of Penelope's story and its association with the Bosnian War. To see how this works, attention is first assigned to the impact of the Balkan conflict on Ferris, followed by a discussion of the film's intertwining themes of truth and fiction.

I

Penelope's penchant for sleep and dreams came from Ferris' own recurring dream of a naked woman wandering through a desolate mansion (Glass 2017). His incorporation of this imagining into his version of the story of Penelope and the overlaying of the Bosnian War combine to produce a modern urgency and relevance to this piece of creative reception. Moved by the remnants of the conflict while travelling through Croatia, Ferris aimed to highlight some of the prevailing issues from this war that continue to affect life in the Bosnia–Herzegovina region. And while his film may represent a topic that for many Australians is historically and geographically distant, there is an Antipodean quality to *Penelope* that reflects Australia's multicultural identity.

Inspired by the styles of Aleksandr Sokurov, Béla Tarr (Foster 2011; 2014) and Federico Fellini,¹ in addition to Ferris' partnership with the Kurosawa Foundation (2004–7), his filmic influences are indicative of Australia's cultural diversity. His recognition of Sokurov, Tarr and Akira Kurosawa is evident in the film's stunning aesthetics and long, uninterrupted takes that create the sense of Penelope's unknowing and unknowable state of mind. Fellini's cinematic explorations of his dreams and Carl Jung's studies on archetypes of the collective unconscious are also reflected in Ferris' use of his own dream. His interest in Japanese cinema and the arts is expressed by the Japanese-inspired costumes of Penelope and her attendants, while the film's occasional use of slow, methodical movements reflects Noh theatre techniques.

In keeping with this multicultural view is the inclusion of the Australian actor, Natalie Finderle, in the title role. Of Croatian and Hungarian descent, she encapsulates Australia's diverse heritage and provides a contrast to the film's Croatian cast and dialogue (with English subtitles). Her presence in almost every scene reminds audiences of the film's Antipodean links.² Yet her role is also the point where 'Australia' loses its grasp on any meaningful connection to the film. Like Fellini, Ferris was not interested in catering to audience expectations or the box office: 'I don't think in those terms . . . I think [*Penelope*] is the antithesis of creating films for market. That form of working is completely alien to

me' (Higson 2011). Accordingly, the film was not commercially released in Australia; rather, screenings were held at the Art Gallery of NSW and the Nicholson Museum at the University of Sydney (Higson 2011). This lack of public access to, or knowledge of, Ferris' *Penelope* positions it as a European art-house film made by an Australian director. To make sense of his cinematic reading, consideration now turns to his literary interpretation.

II

My friend, dreams are things hard to interpret, hopeless to puzzle out,
and people find that not all of them end in anything.
There are two gates through which the insubstantial dreams issue.
One pair of gates is made of horn, and one of ivory.
Those of the dreams which issue through the gate of sawn ivory,
these are deceptive dreams, their message is never accomplished.
But those that come into the open through the gates of the polished
horn accomplish the truth for any mortal who sees them.

Odyssey 19.560–7

Penelope's description to Odysseus of the meaning of dreams via two distinct gates is an enigmatic account that has prompted several interpretations.³ This passage piqued Ferris' interest, and he drew inspiration from its mysterious themes of sleep and dreams, truth and deception, to create the basis for his interpretation of Penelope's story (Glass 2017). By merging these motifs into a continuous stream of imagery⁴ with limited dialogue, Ferris achieves a state of unknowing, which challenges the spectator to ascertain what is real and what is imagined. Established in the film's opening scene, Penelope is introduced in her bedroom, walking slowly to a curtained window while a crow – a symbol of insight, transformation, destiny and trickery – perches nearby. Her bed is unmade and in the background a dog barks. She gradually makes her way through the maids' quarters before opening a door where the suitors' revelry momentarily breaks the silence. She is then shown at her loom unpicking the shroud (from which an ancient Greek sailing vessel emerges).

This introduction sets the film's tone for a merging of dream and myth. Penelope's slow pace through doorways into different spaces draws the spectator into her dreams and her reality – her headspace. That her mode of dress rarely changes between day and night adds to the film's sense of unknowing and whether her actions and words are real or imagined. The film's pointed references to the *Odyssey*, such as the woven shroud, and the image of a boat that purportedly contains Odysseus, link Ferris' heroine to her mythic origins. The shroud's likeness to a spider's web is suggestive of entrapment and, although Penelope is responsible for its creation, defacement and eventual destruction, its existence signifying her own captivity between her love of, and faithfulness to, Odysseus and her promise to the suitors.

In Homer's *Odyssey*, Penelope experiences three visions: the first shows her sister, Iphthime, offering soothing words to stop her grieving for Odysseus and Telemachus

(4.795–841); the second features the death of her geese (19.535–3), while the third reveals her desire for Odysseus to lie beside her (20.87–90). Each episode shows Penelope's interaction with others, which obfuscates the reality of her isolation; that is, her need for guidance and support at a time when she feels insecure and vulnerable.

Likewise, Ferris' heroine experiences three dreams. Conveyed via the film's imagery, these 'visions' symbolize insight and prophecy. Her first imagining features the deaths of her geese and opens with Penelope lovingly holding one of her birds by the water's edge; a peaceful scene that is abruptly disturbed by a darkening sky and thunder. Penelope is then shown clutching the limp and bloodied body of this same bird; her distressed expression is replaced by feathers falling from the sky and carpeting the ground like snow, symbolizing the death of the flock. In Homer's story, this dream foretells the arrival of Odysseus and his destruction of the suitors, followed by the hanging of Penelope's recalcitrant maids. In the film, however, there is no hint of Odysseus' return and this, combined with the marked absence of Telemachus, underscores the focus on female isolation (Glass 2017). This emphasizes the bond between Penelope and her servants and a human parallel to her attachment to the geese. Thus, the happy chattering of Penelope's maids echoes the content sounds of her flock, while the rustling of freshly washed and 'hung' sheets is reminiscent of a bird's flapping wings. In this way, the film uses themes associated with Penelope's vision in the *Odyssey* but shifts attention away from the suitors' fates to that of her attendants. Accordingly, Penelope's imagining of the grisly deaths of her birds is a prophecy for the impending demise of her servants. That both the geese and maidens are Penelope's sole responsibility also suggests that only she is accountable for their future safety.

In her second dream, Ferris shows Penelope wandering through a forest. Leaves carpet the ground and the trees are bare. In this imagining, Penelope's journey into the



Figure 17.1 'Penelope naked and unconscious on a bed of leaves.' Ben Ferris, *Penelope*. © Ben Ferris.

Antipodean Antiquities

woods is an expression of her yearning for Odysseus. Husband and wife are shown having sex, their naked bodies against the backdrop of the forest reminiscent of ancient Greek and Roman sculptures. The morning light reveals Penelope alone, unconscious and lying naked on a bed of leaves. Her pale body appears cold and lifeless and, although her maidens' slow, methodical search for their mistress seems out of place with the urgency of her condition,⁵ they are genuinely concerned. They wrap her body in a shroud-like covering and, in a similar manner to a funeral procession, carry Penelope back to her home.

This symbolic interpretation of her desire for both Odysseus and her death⁶ points to Penelope's inner-most thoughts, as recognized in a prayer to Artemis:

I can feel you dear Artemis. I can feel you near me. And I can feel you inside me.
Please. Please, kill me. Release me from my misery, and take my life away from me.
Drown me in my own tears. Then I won't have to live without my Odysseus.
Reunited with him in death. Together again . . . in death. There is no place for me
in this world . . . Most people find comfort in sleep. But sleep doesn't come to me
and take away my sorrow.

'Prayer at Night/Suitors'

Indeed, the forest setting evokes the presence of Artemis in the dream, with the goddess also present in a mural at the beginning of the film. The painting tells the story of Actaeon, who saw Artemis bathing in a spring. Horrified at his disrespect, she sought revenge by transforming him into a stag that was hunted and killed by his own hounds.⁷ The artwork, however, offers a different version, showing Actaeon in human form, attempting to escape Artemis' arrows.⁸ Shot in the back, his flailing image sets the scene for the fate of the suitors ('Opening').

Penelope's 'death' in her second dream also signifies a shift from Homer's interpretation to a heroic version of her archetypal self. This transformative cycle parallels similar examples in Greek and Roman myth that describe the hero journeying into the Underworld – a symbolic death – to re-emerge with the knowledge and determination to seek retribution.⁹ The commencement of Penelope's 'awakening', however, occurs while she sleeps and what she 'sees' is akin to a visit to Hades.

She imagines that her maidens are concerned about her health and, to maintain a level of calm and protect their mistress' dignity, they choose to inform the suitors of her current physical state. Interrupting their discussion of Penelope's wellbeing is the introduction of salacious gossip¹⁰ that then questions her virtue:

- I mean what did you say?
- Oh c'mon. She was alone.
- No she wasn't.
- How do you know she wasn't alone?
- Sara says she saw somebody.
- Who did she see?

- I don't know.
- Maybe she was sleepwalking.
- Oh please . . .

'Gossip Scene/Rape'

Her maids' chatter introduces themes of doubt and links Penelope's story to the fictional (myth-making) process. Yet Ferris' emphasis on her devotion and loyalty to Odysseus quashes any claim to the contrary; rather, for Penelope, her servants' false notions are unthinkable – the worst form of gossip she could imagine – but this theme of the unimaginable also reiterates her most worrisome concern of all: the safety of her female attendants.

Penelope's dream continues; showing the maidens entering the banqueting hall to advise the suitors of her condition. Their arrival, however, is unexpectedly halted by the suitors' emergence from the shadows and their corralling of the women.¹¹ With memories of the suitors' earlier bragging of bestiality resurfacing – “But I'm telling you from the very beginning sheep have been the best animals. The best way to rape a sheep . . . Between the walls . . .” (*Suitors/Unweaving*) – the impending fate of Penelope's servants is sealed. The women are given *no voice* to explain their presence; instead, like lambs to the slaughter, they are violently raped.¹² The remnants of the suitors' bloodthirsty gorging combined with female bodies strewn throughout the dining hall, their contorted faces screaming in the throes of agony, positions the women as innocent victims. Like Penelope's earlier vision of the deaths of her geese, this more graphic dream is also prophetic: if these men remain, the women are in mortal danger.

Her dream concludes with memories of a miscarriage – possibly that of Telemachus – a devastating loss that finds its basis in the premature passing of Leopold and Molly Bloom's son, Rudy, in *Ulysses* (80). Yet unlike Joyce's whimsical portrayal of Leopold's bereavement (702–3), Ferris' Penelope graphically relives the pain and horror of the miscarriage. From a symbolic perspective, her miscarriage intimates an innate female connection with her female servants between life (sex) and death, which points to a need for transformation; in other words, Penelope's eventual awakening signifies *her* need to embody the role of the hero. This development of Penelope's character from passive female to her desire to be a warrior-queen (see Figure 17.2) also underscores Ferris' focus on the absence of male protection. These women are isolated and vulnerable to attack. In her conscious state, Penelope's acceptance of her new role is signified by the torching of her shroud, an act that symbolizes the rejection of her traditional status as a 'woman in waiting'.

She finds her female attendants outside, chattering and giggling while hanging washed sheets, with each one crudely replicating her woven shroud. This domestic and unexpected scene heightens her imagining of their deaths and, although relieved that her servants have not been harmed, the ease that should be felt is marred by some who can barely contain their laughter. The discord their naivety and flippancy implies, although once again adding an element of doubt to female unity, augments the film's theme of 'unknowing'. Their giggles and whispers contrast with Penelope's earlier belief that her servants were openly questioning her virtue, and Ferris ensures that neither Penelope



Figure 17.2 ‘Penelope and the bow.’ Ben Ferris, *Penelope*. © Ben Ferris.

nor the spectator is fully aware of the reason for their mirth. Shocking in the context of the preceding events, Penelope seems oblivious to their wayward manner, and it is her lack of concern that suggests whatever they find amusing is simply unimportant. Rather, the effect reiterates the impact of their violent deaths in Penelope’s dream.

Yet the theme of doubt is evident during her interactions with Odysseus. Based on her memories, the heroic image traditionally associated with her husband morphs into that of a man who is reluctant to go to war. Partly influenced by the anti-war portrayal of Joyce’s Leopold Bloom,¹³ Ferris’ Odysseus is depicted as a lover rather than a fighter. Penelope’s first memory of her husband shows him leaning by a door, loosely dressed in an army uniform and casually smoking a cigarette. In the background are the sounds of an approaching military unit, yet he makes no effort to join them until summoned. Odysseus’ parting words include his memories of training with the bow and arrow, not as a weapon of war, but more about its use in the skilful battle of love to win Penelope’s hand in marriage.

The theme of love comprises the second of Penelope’s memories. Odysseus is shown lounging on a bed of leaves reading the story of Pygmalion (Figure 17.3), a Greek myth about a man who carved his wife from stone and whose kiss brought her to life. Penelope’s admission to him that she is pregnant while he reads, although greeted warmly, jars with the knowledge that Penelope is and always has been a living, breathing woman. That he seems more interested in reading the book than displaying any long-lasting affection questions his devotion as a husband and future father, which is emphasized further when his earlier request that she should not wait for his return is considered (‘Piano/Odysseus Smokes/Geese’). His attitude points to the possibility that Ferris’ Odysseus is not the man and hero Penelope needs him to be. Whether he even intends to return is debatable.



Figure 17.3 'Odysseus and Penelope – Book scene.' Ben Ferris, *Penelope*. © Ben Ferris.

Armed with this insight – both prophetic and real – Penelope's need to expel the threat of the suitors without the support of her husband is obvious. Her desire to personally eliminate these men one by one is expressed in her final dream, which begins with her appearance before the suitors to announce the contest of the bow:

My suitors, I know you've been waiting for a long time now. It's time to put an end to the waiting. I declare a contest of the bow. In my hand, I hold the hunting bow of Odysseus. Whoever can bend and string it and send an arrow straight through twelve axes ... to him I give my life. I give my life. I will leave this house and remember it only as a dream.

'Bow Contest/Massacre/Odysseus Returns'

But these men neither acknowledge her presence nor her decision. Her maidens line both sides of the dining table with each holding one of the twelve axes. Feathers fall from the sky and leaves carpet the floor. Penelope strings the bow and kills each suitor without resistance. Odysseus then emerges from the shadows, a battered, crippled war veteran, and Penelope leads him through the bloody banqueting hall to their bedroom. He lies on the bed and Penelope falls asleep on his breastplate, with the intertwining branches of a tree completing the film's closing image.

The scene's connections to Artemis and Penelope's geese are apparent while the suitors' disinterest in her appearance in the guise of a warrior-queen underscores their vanity and arrogance. In her role as the 'slayer of men,' Penelope does not meet the suitors' image of a desirable woman, 'worthy' of their lust and greed. Odysseus' arrival shortly after their deaths without even a cursory glance at their fallen bodies devalues their

human worth and highlights his indifference to his wife's significant martial victory. His return as a battle-weary 'hero' is an intelligent interpretation of his disguise as an old beggar in the *Odyssey* but, whereas Homer's Odysseus uses his cover to test his wife's fidelity and initiate a surprise attack against the suitors, the armour worn by Ferris' Odysseus is Penelope's attempt – her desire – to project the image of a war-hero onto her husband. Indeed, her gradual realization of the truth of Odysseus' identity represents an alternative interpretation of the 'recognition scene' in the *Odyssey*.

This final vision reveals Penelope's need to shift from a patient, virtuous wife to a woman who *desires* to act without restraint. Her imaginary transformation is the result of her 'knowing' what she must do ('Maids Hanging Washing/Book Scene'), which has transpired from the insight of her dreams and memories. That she does not achieve her ultimate dream of ridding herself of the suitors and to rest peacefully beside Odysseus points to an uncertain future. These aspects – insight, transformation and destiny – are symbolically linked to the appearance of the crow in the opening scene of the film. Furthermore, Ferris' different interpretations of 'knowing' and 'unknowing' are inextricably connected to the film's perplexing stream of images that offer little 'insight' as to whether what is 'seen' is real or imagined. The visual trickery from this cinematic interplay completes the four symbolic motifs associated with the crow.

The exquisite aesthetics of *Penelope's* mainly pictorial narrative, however, is also a deceptive ploy. There is an enchanting and timeless appeal to each image, lulling the spectator into the film's dreamlike atmosphere and its false sense of security. This becomes evident in the scene directly after the violent rape and murder of Penelope's maids. To witness them unharmed and blissfully unaware of what has just occurred jolts the spectator out of accepting (or knowing) that what is seen is not necessarily what is real. We begin to doubt what we have seen. Moreover, the absence of Telemachus and the reluctant attitude of Odysseus are marked departures from Homer's text, challenging former, traditional readings and rendering them as unknowable. The purpose of Ferris' approach is to force those who 'know' what this story is about out of their complacency, to see beyond the film's clever disguise and to respond to the truth behind his literary re-imagining. The truth is that Ferris' *Penelope* is not just about Odysseus' wife's desire for his return; rather, the film's meta-narrative is an acknowledgement of the atrocities faced by women during the Bosnian War. To begin, consideration is briefly assigned to an overview of the war and female subjection, followed by an analysis of the ways Ferris has incorporated some of the motifs previously discussed into the film's contemporary context.

III

The Bosnian War resulted from a series of political, social and religious factors that originated from the collapse of the former Communist state of Yugoslavia. Over the course of three years, this war caused an estimated 100,000 deaths and 1.8 million displacements (Hall 2014: 45). Yet these statistics do not account for the approximately

20,000 to 50,000 women and girls who were the victims of rape, sexual assault and sexual violence mainly by the Serbian forces.¹⁴ Founded on a religious-based nationalist ideology to ethnically cleanse the former Yugoslavian state of Muslims, the rape and sexual attacks on mostly Bosniak¹⁵ women were considered a deliberate act of genocide. The reason was twofold: the mainly Christian Orthodox Serbs desired to retaliate against the invasion of the Ottoman Empire 600 years prior, and by planting their seed into the Turks' ancestors they would eradicate all traces of the Ottoman's existence.¹⁶ That the make-up of this region is a mixture of Slavic, European and Eastern influences points to the hypocrisy of this ideology, and a notion further supported by the illegitimacy of their children who were often either abandoned or orphaned.

This disturbing introduction to the realities of conflict and invasion contrasts with Ferris' beautiful cinematic reading that effectively sanitizes the ugliness of war via its symbolic and literary re-imaginings. As such, in the film's rape scene, the constant and undesired presence of the suitors is no longer a poetic fiction but a harsh reminder of female isolation and vulnerability during times of military conflict. Like the Serbian forces, these men are invaders. Their noisy, ravenous and bloody cinematic depiction is symbolic of the atrocities that occurred during the Bosnian conflict. This 'hungry horde' of men whose perverted sexual appetite on the 'best way to rape a sheep' and '[b]etween the walls' not only degrades any noble aspirations they may have once had but also dehumanizes Penelope's attendants. Women as livestock for breeding purposes echoes the Serbs' aim to ethnically cleanse the Bosnia-Herzegovina region of Muslims, and is a view supported by some of the structures appropriated for this purpose, which included: hotels, schools, restaurants, hospitals, factories, auditoriums, brothels, animal shelters and fenced pens (Salzman 1998: 359).¹⁷ In this respect, the dormitory-style conditions of Penelope's maids' sleeping quarters, or Ferris' distinct divide between the male and female realms, are also open to scrutiny.

The mass rape also draws on the vast level of female victimization at this time and, although Penelope's attendants' deaths seem to defeat the purpose of impregnation, the closing images of their fallen bodies is both beautiful and disturbing. Reminiscent of a scene from a bacchanalia, the contorted faces of the women are in death rather than ecstasy, their debased figures illustrating the extreme level of violence and bloodshed often associated with Serbian attacks:

In an orgy of nationalism bathed in alcohol, athletic contests, and Serbian songs, Serb soldiers threw Muslims off of cliffs and from hotel roofs into rivers, carved Orthodox crosses into their chests, hacked off the arms or legs of their victims, made women clean up the mess from such amputations, and then raped the women on top of the blood soaked rags.

Boose 2002: 74-5

Excessive in its depiction of Islamic degradation and female disempowerment, this description reveals the horrors faced by both men and women.¹⁸ The desire to escape this type of violent persecution must have been overwhelming to the point where death

became a viable option.¹⁹ This consideration takes us back to Penelope's prayer to Artemis: "Please. Please, kill me. Release me from my misery, and take my life away from me. Drown me in my own tears" ('Prayer at Night/Suitors'). And so a new meaning is given to Penelope's naked body in the forest after a night of love-making (sex) with Odysseus; her slightly marred and corpse-like figure symbolic of murdered rape victims, or those left to die by exposure, or those who jumped from the balconies of their rape camps to the forests below.

Penelope's 'fallen body' also offers an alternative and critical view of her relationship with Odysseus. His 'disappearance' after a night of love-making and her pregnancy announcement refocuses attention not on Odysseus' adoration of his wife but on Penelope as a vessel for sex and life. He has planted his seed and he is pleased that Penelope is with child but, in line with the Serbs' treatment of women as an integral part of the ethnic cleansing programme, he has no further need of her. In this respect, his intense interest in a story about kissing a woman made of stone is no longer a fanciful romance but a tale about unwanted male attention. Furthermore, Odysseus' request that Penelope should *not* wait for his return combined with his wanderings in the *Odyssey*, which show him having relations with several females, point to his lack of devotion as a husband and future father. Therefore, his absence as the paternal figurehead should be seen not just as a casualty of war but, also, as its active and destructive participant (rapist). This returns us to a reconsideration of the loss of Penelope's unborn baby. Clearly, she is distraught but, significantly, she does not grieve. The episode acts as both a night vision and memory yet Penelope's rapid dismissal of its occurrence – almost as if it never happened – offers an alternative view of an unwanted pregnancy.

For those who survived – women, children and men – the results of a war that ended over twenty years ago continue. Yet there have only been limited efforts to acknowledge and evaluate the human cost. For instance, the statistical disparities in numbers of affected women point to the shame of acknowledging the suffering they endured. Some husbands refuse to discuss their wives' treatment at the hands of Serbian forces; reflecting a socio-cultural trend in the region to erase the events of the past to rebuild Bosnia's future. These ramifications are acknowledged by Ferris' use of nature to gradually cover the prone bodies of the women with leaves, and showing vegetation encroaching on the internal walls of Penelope's stately home. Compensation is also difficult to receive as victims must prove repeated rape to receive official recognition and support. Attempts to suppress the female voice are thereby made explicit by the film's mainly visual narrative, while themes of knowing and unknowing combined with sparse snatches of dialogue recognize the few women who have made their fate known.

The Serbian perpetrators of these atrocities have rarely been convicted, and most have returned to their former lives as if nothing happened. That many of their victims can trace these men on social media, such as Facebook, illustrates the unwillingness of authorities to pursue prosecution. This unsatisfactory conclusion is addressed by Ferris in Penelope's final dream. Her desire to kill the suitors with Odysseus's bow and arrow represents the thousands of women who want vengeance and retribution. But the suitors' deaths are imaginary, their continued existence and freedom from the resultant horrors

of the war signifying the lack of closure experienced by their victims. This tragedy is then underscored by Penelope's wish for Odysseus' return because, regardless of his faults, her desire fits with her iconic status as the faithful wife. Nevertheless, the film's consideration of Odysseus and Telemachus who are, in effect, both 'missing in action' points to the many fathers, brothers and sons who remain missing from the Bosnian war. Part of this loss can be attributed to the Serbs' ethnic cleansing program as evidenced in 1995, when approximately 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were exterminated and buried in a mass gravesite in Srebrenica. To this day, unidentified skeletal remains continue to be discovered, re-affirming the harsh injustices of a war based on an outdated ideology.

The lasting effects of this conflict clearly resonated with Ferris. As an Australian who has seen the devastation wrought on the landscape and peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina, his desire to make comment on these events in his debut feature film, *Penelope*, speaks of this war's personal significance. This is supported by his incorporation of cinematic influences and classical themes that define his filmic style and interests. That Ferris' own recurring dream formed the basis of his cinematic interpretation of Homer's *Odyssey* unequivocally adds a personal element, while his reading of Joyce's *Ulysses* subtly imbues the film with an anti-war message. Firmly positioned as an art-house film, the limited screening in Australia meant that for a country already distant from the Balkan region, the film made little impact. Yet this was of no concern for Ferris; rather, his desire to cinematically address the Bosnian conflict acts as a vehicle for his own artistic and cathartic release.

In their attempts to debunk the Penelope myth, the words that proliferate in feminist-inspired creative reception practices are derailed by the silence of Ferris' film. Indeed, feminist discourse questions the continuing legitimacy of Penelope's archetypal status, yet the connections made between Ferris' interpretation of Homer's heroine and her attendants with Bosnia's rape victims remind us that good, honest women, like Penelope, continue to exist and are sometimes powerless to defend themselves. Evident in the plight of her chorus of maidens, their words and actions underscore the (dis)unity of female support during times of military crises; their own stories reminiscent of the timelessness of ancient Greek tragedy.

To assume these acts are isolated to the Bosnian War is naive. Rape and death are part of any war, but what makes this military conflict stand apart from others is the deliberate attempt by the Serbs to forcefully impregnate women en masse to eradicate Bosnia's Muslim population. With little chance of retribution or compensation, these women, like Penelope, continue to live in a constant waking nightmare. This is the crux of Ferris' film. The seamless transitions between Penelope's dreams and her reality mean that she cannot escape her eventual fate, and as such, her plight reveals that any romantic notions we may have once held on the relationship between Odysseus and Penelope are simply a fiction.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Deliberately singular.
2. Throughout the volume, the terms 'First Australians' or 'Aboriginal Australians' and 'Māori' are used. When the term 'indigenous' is employed in lower-case, it denotes a generic reference without geographical and/or cultural specificities; in the upper-case, the term denotes Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islanders or Māori peoples as specified.
3. 'Cultural cringe' was coined by A. A. Phillips (1950). See also, Bill Pearson's 'Fretful Sleepers: A Sketch of New Zealand Behaviour and its Implications for the Artist' (1952). Today the cultural cringe is less relevant: Australasia is more culturally confident; Aboriginal Australians and Māori have stronger voices in definitions and productions of culture; and there have been shifts away from narrow Anglo-Celtic ties towards broader, more global European, Asian and Middle-Eastern perspectives.
4. Coined by Pana (1993) in her analysis of David Malouf's novel based on Ovid's exile, *An Imaginary Life* (1978), the Tomis complex is a marked Australian literary trope. Pana builds on Harry Heseltine's study, *The Uncertain Self: Essays in Australian Literature and Criticism* (1986). See, Liney in this volume.
5. On Deep Time, and its dialogue with Classical Reception, see Butler (2016). Deep Time emphasizes human presence and is particularly potent in relation to Aboriginal Australians who, having lived through the Ice Age, are the longest continuing culture in the world.
6. See Hardwick (2004); Goff (2005); Hardwick and Gillespie (2007); Bradley (2010); Greenwood (2010); Orrells, Bhambra and Roynon (2011); Hardwick and Harrison (2013); Vasunia (2013); Burton, Perris and Tatum (2017).
7. While Aboriginal Australians, Torres Strait Islanders and Māori usually engage with narratives that speak to their own traditions and direct experiences, Davidson (Chapter 4) notes the increase in Classical Reception by indigenous artists and writers: 'A small number of Māori and other Polynesian authors writing in English had drawn on classical sources to a limited extent from the 1950s onwards, but in the last few decades this phenomenon has been further developed' (p.65). The disconnect between Classics and Indigenous Australasians is more strongly evidenced in Australia than New Zealand. As evident in Burton, Perris and Tatum (2017), there are more Māori and Pasifika practitioners, scholars and students engaged with Classical Studies compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Nevertheless, more research needs to be done on, for example, Robert Sullivan's poem cycle, *Captain Cook in the Underworld* (2002), and Witi Ihimaera's novels, *The Matriarch* (1986) and *The Dream Swimmer* (1997). On Sullivan to date, see Orr (2008); on Ihimaera, see Perris (2013; 2016); see also Ihimaera's chapter in Burton, Perris and Tatum (2017: 51–75).
8. Only within the last decade (approximately) has there been a more formal acknowledgement of the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori soldiers who also fought in the Great War, including the Gallipoli Campaign.
9. This refers to the governmental and missionary practice of removing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants and children from their families to be raised in institutions or foster homes between 1905 and 1969, approximately.

10. Smith wrote extensively on Australasian colonial art and the classicizing gaze, see references to Smith in Chapter 1. Among the few publications on Australian artistic responses to classicism in a more general context, see Edwards (1989); to date, there is not an equivalent publication for New Zealand art.
11. Māori for New Zealand, usually translated as ‘land of the long white cloud’.
12. On *Xena* and Classical Reception Studies, see Early and Kennedy (2003); Potter (2009); Stevenson (2017). Somewhat unexpectedly, *Xena* as the specific subject of scholarship in Classical Reception Studies is not, to date, as plentiful as one may expect, with most attention being placed on the series within the context of Popular Culture Studies. On the Homeric Penelope as an increasingly popular subject in contemporary creative reception works, see Rawlings (2003); Atwood (2005); Anghelaki-Rooke (2009); for increasingly plentiful scholarship on the latter works, see, for example, Braund (2012); Brown (2012); Hauser (2017).
13. As per Felski (2011) via Latour (1991).
14. My italics.

1 BLACK OUT: CLASSICIZING INDIGENEITY IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

1. John White was the chief surgeon of the colony; George Worgan was also a surgeon. In Hunter’s monograph (Ch. VI), he describes the expedition to the Hawkesbury River, and names other men who participated. In Figure 1.1a Phillip is second from the right; Worgan is third from the right; White is seated Lancaster (2015: 205).
2. On the two styles converging in the visual and written responses of both Banks and Parkinson, see Heringman (2013: 25–75), who described them as ‘naturalist-antiquaries ... recording “primitive” customs with an eye to antiquity and preservation’ (71).
3. In the ‘List of Subscribers’ in Hunter’s monograph, which reads like a ‘who’s who’ of British collectors, connoisseurs and gentlemen elite, many of the doyens of Classicism are cited, including Josiah Wedgwood and the Earl of Elgin.
4. Also the influence of Johann Winckelmann (1717–68).
5. Misidentified as ‘The Dying Gladiator’, a classification that continued sporadically until the twentieth century, see Haskell and Penny (1982: 225–7).
6. In contrast to the high number of drawings of Polynesian and Māori peoples made by Parkinson, there is a small number of drawings of Aboriginal Australians; see Smith (1985b: 21).
7. Eora Country was approximately 1,800 square kilometres in size. ‘It extended along the coast from the Hawkesbury River in the north to the Georges River in the south. . . . The Eora people were structured into a number of subgroups, who spoke closely related languages or dialects’ Willmot (1987: 15).
8. ‘The eighteenth century is a period in which the study of antiquity was not yet restricted to academic specialists and segregated university departments. . . . in Britain . . . amateur scholars and literary circles outside academia dominated the study of the classical past well into the nineteenth century’ Vlassopoulos (2010: 32–3).
9. See Tacitus on both the Britons and Calgacus (*Agricola* 29.3–4; 30–2 [speech]); on Boudicca (*Annals* 14.35.1–5); on the comparative assessment of Caratacus (*Ann.* 12.40.2–6). See also Tacitus’ *Germania* for the idealizing of the ‘noble savage’. See also Caesar’s *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* on Vercingetorix (7.4 [as guerrilla leader], 7.14 and 20 [speeches], 7.89 [final

speech to his men and surrender to Caesar]); of related interest, see Lionel Royer's 'Vercingetorix Throws Down his Arms at the Feet of Julius Caesar' (1899). On the influence of Tacitus on British constructions of imperialism, see Bradley (2010b).

10. See Livy on Hannibal (21.4).
11. The library notes concerning this correspondence read: 'It is presumed that this letter, signed by Banks, remained untransmitted. There is, however, a possibility that it was placed with the papers of Banks by Library staff in the early years of this century.'
12. On classicism, the British Empire and the British Museum, opened in 1759, see Bradley (2010a: 2–9).

2 AUSTRALIA AS UNDERWORLD: CONVICT CLASSICS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

1. For a discussion of ancient Roman ideas about the Antipodes, see Leadbetter (2012). See also Johnson's Introduction in this volume.
2. The asterisks are part of Walker's text and appear where he felt that explanation was necessary.
3. The poems attributed to McNamara and short biographical sketches appear in Meredith and Whalan (1979); Murray (2005). Quotations from McNamara's poems are here taken from Murray.
4. Swift's authorship of this poem has been doubted since at least 1814. See Williams (1958: 1073).
5. See, for example, the notes to lines 83 and 87 in Williams (1958: 832).
6. Punctuation as in original.
7. See, for example, the pantomime artist and theatrical manager John Rich's *The Necromancer, or Harlequin Doctor Faustus* (1724), in which Charon, who appears as a character, uses the phrase.
8. Fénelon's book (in translation) is thought to have been among the books brought to New South Wales on the First Fleet, Richards (1988: 11).
9. The punctuation here is as it appears in the manuscript.
10. The history of those papers, and questions about the identity of their authors, are discussed in Wills (2015: 319–49); Maxwell-Stewart (2001a, b).
11. On the classicizing aspects of British imperialism more widely, and the use of ancient precedents to justify Britain's colonial practices in the eighteenth century, see Vlassopoulos (2010).

3 AGAMEMNON COMES TO THE ANTIPODES: THE ORIGINS OF STUDENT DRAMA AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

1. See also Monaghan (2016: 422) who notes a 'series of "visitations" by (often aging) overseas actresses playing the protagonist role in productions and versions of Euripides' *Medea* in the second half of the nineteenth century'.
2. One reviewer of *Agamemnon* expressed the contemporary attitude: 'A modern play professes mainly to amuse, but with the Greeks the performance of a tragedy was a serious business' ('Agamemnon' 1886).
3. From: <http://sydney.edu.au/about-us/our-story/timeline.html> (accessed 1 March 2017).
4. This was, they note, 'a practice retained throughout the antipodes until well into the twentieth century' and 'explains Sydney's long attachment to a liberal classical curriculum'.

5. This is a notably more positive view of the classical legacy than the ‘Antipodes as Hades’ trope of the convict era described in White’s chapter in this volume.
6. There is some suggestion that the production was proposed by the Student Union, see Bavard (1886) but Scott’s knowledge of the Balliol production must certainly have played a big role in deciding to mount the play.
7. The connection between the institutions extends back to the earliest years of both: ‘Sydney Grammar School was founded by an Act of Parliament in 1854, after Sir Henry Parkes, the Father of Australian Federation, tabled a petition from a group of citizens concerned that the fledgling University of Sydney should have a “nursery” to provide it with well prepared undergraduates’ (see: <http://www.sydgram.nsw.edu.au/college-street/about-grammar/welcome/history-of-the-school> [accessed 1 March 2017]).
8. Richard, as Senior Prefect, delivered the Prologue; his younger brother William was the Choragus.
9. See also Thompson’s obituary of Scott that notes how his heart ‘cherishes grateful memories of what he did for his students’, Thompson (1925).
10. Gregan McMahon (1874–1941), for example, followed the path from Sydney Grammar School to a BA in Classics (and later worked as an articled clerk in a Sydney law firm); an active member of SUDS, he went on to form Australia’s first repertory company, the Melbourne Repertory Company, in 1911 and had a long and influential career as actor, director and producer.

4 SALAMIS AND GALLIPOLI: THE CAMPAIGNS OF PHILLIP MANN

1. For an interview with Mann on Classical Reception, see <http://www.open.ac.uk/arts/research/pvcrs/2017/mann> (accessed 12 November 2017).
2. A sample of reviewers’ comments on this production offers considerable insight into what might be called the popular ‘reception’ of ancient drama: ‘Despite the necessary scaling down . . . this version demonstrates that there is plenty of life in a play written more than 2500 years ago’ (Atkinson in Smythe 2004: 383–4); ‘The music . . . together with the dance, lends colour and energy to the production of a new play that would otherwise be static for modern tastes’ Budd in Smythe (2004: 384); and ‘*Agamemnon* is basically a boring Greek soap’ (Cameron in Smythe 2004: 384).
3. For a brief account of other adaptations and re-stagings of the play in modern times, see Rosenbloom 2006: 161–3.
4. For discussions of the Gallipoli campaign from the New Zealand point of view, see, for example, McGibbon (2000: 190–8) and, in more detail, Pugsley (1998), and Stowers (2005). On the Anzac legend and its classical metaphors in the art of Sidney Nolan, see Midford in this volume.
5. For excellent discussions of the historical background to the Aeschylean play as well as a wide range of interpretations of it, see Rosenbloom (2006: 11–38; 139–63). A further discussion of the play in the context of fifth century BC history can be found in Harrison 2000.
6. An officer in the British Army, General Sir Ian Standish Monteith Hamilton was best known for commanding the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force during the Gallipoli Campaign. For a concise outline of the Allied landing at Gallipoli in Western Turkey, see Midford in this volume.
7. This rhetoric is very much at odds, of course, with versions of the situation by those who were there. For examples of eye-witness accounts of the Gallipoli campaign recalled by New Zealanders, see, Shadbolt (1988), and Kinloch (2005). For discussions of the memoirs of Aitken 1963, see Calder 2015 and Shieff 2015.

8. Among other dramatic and poetic responses to the Gallipoli campaign by New Zealand writers, mention may be made of Shadbolt's play, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, first performed at the Mercury Theatre Auckland 23 April 1982, directed by Ian Mune, designed by Richard Jeziorny. A work concerning Gallipoli, with a direct link to ancient Greece, specifically the Trojan War, can be found in Campbell's *Gallipoli and Other Poems* (1999). The poetic sequence 'Gallipoli' appears on pp. 11–28, with poems v and vi (pp. 15–17) being entitled 'Achilles' and 'Helen of Troy' respectively.
9. There were normally some students of Māori descent in Mann's university productions.
10. See <http://www.ellinikotheatro.org/the-maori-bacchae/> (accessed 12 November 2017).
11. Mann's title is not associated with the well-known scholarly monograph by T. P. Wiseman, *Cinna the Poet, and Other Roman Essays* (Leicester, Leicester University Press: 1974); correspondence with the author (May 2017).
12. The historical Te Rauparaha was a Ngāti Toa chief, probably born in the 1760s, who was involved in extensive tribal warfare, and who is perhaps most famous for his exploits from a base on Kāpiti Island, which lies about 5 km off the west coast of the lower North Island of New Zealand. He died in 1849.
13. A similar comment could be made about Kate Elliott's *The Spiritwalker Trilogy* (2010–13), which introduces Phoenicians, for example, and applauds the end of the Roman Empire at a rather different date from the historical one, and Jay Kristoff's *The Nevernight Chronicle Trilogy* (2016–17 so far, with the third book expected in September 2019). This one contains versions of a Republic, a Senate, a Consul and gladiatorial games.
14. Significant scholarly editions of Aeschylus' play include Broadhead (1960), and Garvie (2009). Examples of modern translations are those of Collard (2008), and Sommerstein's edition and translation of *Persians* and other plays (2008).

5 WESLEY ENOCH'S *BLACK MEDEA*

References to Euripides' *Medea* are by line number (all translations by Michael Ewans).

References to Enoch's *Black Medea* are by page to the text published in 2007 (Enoch's play was produced several times before formal publication in 2007, and the script also appeared in several manuscript and excerpt forms; see, for example, Enoch 2002). We would like to thank Laura Ginters for her insightful suggestions.

1. Neither play has been published.
2. On Enoch, see Smith (2004). See also, Croggon (2010: 59); Casey (2013: 113); Kanarakis (2013: 423–4).
3. In her research on the Medea Project, Fraden (2001: 65) discusses the effects of the work on the participants: 'we hear powerful stories of physical abuse, poverty, and abandonment. Their experiences of reality are searing. . . . We understand more fully some of the reasons why these Medeas act as they do.'
4. For the 'numerous anti-racist productions of Euripides' *Medea* in Britain in the 1980s', see Macintosh (2005: 65; 75–6, n.1). These references are references in passing, as the focus of Macintosh's chapter, entitled '*Medea* between the Wars: The Politics of Race and Empire', is on the version of the play by Henri-René Lenorman.
5. Euripides' *Medea* has an important place in modern Australian theatre. It was the opening production of the Australian Drama Company for the new Australian Elizabethan Theatre Company, thereby heralding the beginning of professional (subsidized) theatre in Australia. It

opened in the Australian Capital Territory (Albert Hall, Yarralumia) in September 1955 before touring widely. Judith Anderson, the famous Australian expatriate actress, returned ‘home’ to play the title role.

6. Adapted from Ewans (2007: 55–60).
7. First Australians use the term ‘Country’ to denote individual, family-based regions. An individual’s land of origin – the land itself – its surrounding sea, sky, rivers, flora and fauna, and the spirituality associated with them, designate ‘Country’. See also Rose (1996: 7).
8. See note 12.
9. No author, or pages.
10. Medea then says that if Jason has made her pregnant again, she will kill that child too. This chilling detail is not in Euripides; it echoes Seneca (*Medea* 1011ff.).
11. Perhaps foreshadowing the material significance and symbolic power of the kitchen table in Enoch’s play, *The Story of Miracles at Cookie’s Table* (2007b). Like *Black Medea*, this play features the theme of domestic drama and pain, as a mother and son fight over a wooden kitchen table that has been handed down throughout generations. Again, like *Black Medea*, *Cookie’s Table* deals with themes of dispossession from, and connections to, Country.
12. Acrylic painting style introduced into indigenous communities in the early 1970s to enable people to record Songlines (traditionally evoked in sand drawings) but without revealing Lore (knowledge and customs of Jukurrpa) to those outside Country. On Songlines, see note 14.
13. Dorothy was a so-called ‘bush birth’ and as such there is not an accurate record of the day, month or year.
14. Songlines are the stories of Jukurrpa and relate to Country. Songlines have been, and continue to be, handed down among families. The term was coined by Chatwin in 1987, ‘but the concept is ancient and embedded in traditional Aboriginal cultures. They are often referred to as “Dreaming Tracks”, and can also be called “strings” Clarke (2003: 19) in the sense that they connect different people and sacred sites’ Norris and Harney (2014: 143).
15. For this declaration – the very name is enough to characterize her and her power – see Seneca *Medea* 171 and 910.
16. The Rainbow Serpent appears in Jukurrpa and the accounts and name vary according to Country. However, the Rainbow Serpent is usually a creation god and the source of life.
17. Enoch, Interview, ‘Beyond the wounds of a classic taboo’ (2005).
18. Enoch, Interview, ‘How Do You Solve a Problem Like Medea – Wesley Enoch’ (2015).

6 WHAT WOMEN CRITICS KNOW THAT MEN DON’T

1. I say this in homage to the review of *Antigone* by Andrew Furhman, in which he calls my interpretation ‘a terrible, terrible idea’. This phrase was taken up by Truscott et al., and is liberally sprinkled throughout *Wild Bore*.
2. *Antigone*, directed by Adena Jacobs, played at Melbourne’s Malthouse Theatre from 21 August to 13 September 2015.
3. In this chapter, the title is reused very much in inverted commas.
4. ArtsHub serves the Australian Arts community, providing reviews, what’s on information, job and grant announcements, among other news and updates; see <http://www.artshub.com.au/>

5. All comments were initially available via <http://performing.artshub.com.au/news-article/opinions-and-analysis/performing-arts/jane-griffiths/what-women-critics-know-that-men-dont-249447>. They remained available from October 2015 until July 2017.

7 JAMES K. BAXTER AND THE GORGON MOON

1. Baxter failed Latin I at Otago University in 1944, where his fellow student and later fellow poet Alistair Campbell described him as ‘a fair scholar but not particularly gifted in foreign languages’ McKay (1990: 71, 79). Later, at Victoria University College in the early 1950s, he passed Latin I and II ‘with very modest marks’, as well as ‘Greek HAL’ (History, Art & Literature) McKay (1990: 125, 135, 143).
2. About two-thirds of the poems Baxter wrote during his lifetime remain unpublished, mostly in twenty-six manuscript notebooks in the Hocken Library at Otago University. References to the unpublished poems take the form ‘N18.3’, i.e. notebook 18, poem 3. His previously unpublished prose writings are now collected in Weir (2015).
3. The preceding paragraphs draw extensively on material in the book’s Introduction.
4. Compare the purely negative treatment of the Underworld by nineteenth-century Australian convict writers, discussed by White in Chapter 2. It is perhaps a mark of the difference between Australia’s and New Zealand’s colonial societies that Baxter, for all his anti-establishment position, is able to treat Hades primarily as a psychological rather than a political metaphor.
5. Contra the scholarship suggesting that ‘many-breasted’ is probably a misreading of the ancient images, which were, in fact festooned with bulls’ scrota Nielsen (2009: 455).
6. Hekate is in her own right a major figure in Baxter’s personal mythology: see Miles, Davidson and Millar 2011: 99–102, 302–3. Elizabeth Hale, in Chapter 10 below, discusses the handling of the lunar Triple Goddess in Margaret Mahy’s *The Changeover*.
7. Tarras is a small farming community in Central Otago, near where Baxter worked as a farmhand for a few months after dropping out of university.
8. ‘Ripe archaic’ is an art-historical term for the high period of Greek Archaic art in the early fifth century BC. Another powerful vision of the moon as demonic (though not explicitly gendered as female) is ‘Midwinter Moon (for Rowley Habib)’ (written 1966, published 1974; Baxter (2004: 364–5)), in which the poet sees ‘the moon like a bullock’s skull’ and apostrophizes it as ‘Midwinter moon, great demon’, begging it to ‘[s]uck out’ his suffering heart and ‘[g]ive me the face of bare shattered rock/With which you look down on the snakepit of life/Without an atom of pain!’
9. This is the second of three versions of the poem, all unpublished, the others being ‘Moonlight on Water’ (N22.67) and ‘Moonlight on the Sea’ (N22.78). Kapiti is an offshore island near Wellington, with somewhat ominous associations as the stronghold of the nineteenth-century chief Te Rauparaha (see Davidson 251n.12 in this volume). ‘Paua’ is iridescent blue/green abalone shell, used for eyes in Māori sculpture.
10. ‘Dionysiac’ implies the Nietzschean distinction between Apollonian and Dionysian poetry. In his interview with Weir, Baxter suggests that Catholic or Christian art is inherently ‘wounded art. There is blood in it; you know, the wounds of the person are present in it. It’s close to the Crucifixion. It’s not Apollonian: it’s more Dionysiac’ (Weir 1974: 244).

11. Literally ‘the hidden place’, a Māori phrase referring to the world of gods and spirits; as discussed below, Baxter idiosyncratically uses it to refer to the unknowable nature of the Divine.
12. Newton (2009) is a fascinating account of this period and Baxter’s relationship with Māori culture, though Newton is more interested in the commune itself than in Baxter the poet, who is somewhat side-lined in his account.

8 CLODIA THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

1. Stead’s versions of Catullus can be found in several of his collections but most notably in the ‘Clodian Songbook’ in *Geographies* (1982); ‘From the Clodian Songbook’ in *Between* (1988); and in *The Yellow Buoy Poems 2007–2012* (2013). On the Catullus poems of both Stead and Baxter, see Harrison 2009.
2. See Jackson (2009: 82–96).
3. In the notes to *I, Clodia* (2014: 67), I propose a reading order for Catullus’ poems to work alongside my Clodia poems: 2, 5, 7, 3, 51, 83, 8, 85, 92, 86, 87, 70, 72, 58a, 75, 76, 77, 79, 60, 11, 101, 64, 65, 63, 31, 68 (a and b), 49, 109, 36, 107. This gives a narrative in which the break-up of the relationship takes place half-way through the sequence, is followed by the long narrative poems Catullus wrote while out of Rome, and in which can be read his unresolved feelings for Clodia, allowing for the reconciliation poems (107, 36 and 109) to conclude the story with a romantic ending. The placement of poem 11 here depends on a reading of the third verse in which the hypothetical visit to the monuments of Caesar is followed by an equally hypothetical visit to the horrible and distant Britons, therefore making it possible to date this before Caesar’s conquests of Britain in 55 and 54 BC. But it is also possible to shift poem 11 till after the poems from Bithynia (and this would still work alongside the Clodia sequence). This ordering is very much my own, and I think there is no scholarly precedent for it. Although I think it does not contradict any definitively established dates, the fact is that I have arranged the poems in this order to serve narrative rather than scholarly purposes.
4. See for instance Martin (1992: 45), though he also suggests the break with Clodia might be a secondary reason; see also, Skinner (2003: 127).
5. See for instance Burl (2004: 159), though he adds: ‘There were many reasons for leaving Rome’ (2004: 161), and lists the death of his brother as one of them. Wiseman gloriously denies that either possible cause was a factor, seeing no reason to believe ‘the traditional hypothesis that Catullus visited his brother’s tomb while on his Bithynian journey’ (1969: 37) and arguing that ‘Nobody knows whether Lesbia *really* prayed for Catullus’ safe return; the poet was quite at liberty to invent the details of his relationship . . . there is no other evidence that Catullus even knew Lesbia before he came back from Bithynia’ (1969: 46–7).

9 PARILIA POSCOR – DAVID MALOUF REMEMBERS THE PARILIA (FASTI 4.721FF.)

1. In the political atmosphere of the late Republic and early Augustan period, the Parilia was a sensitive institution due to its foundational weight. For example, after Munda (45 BC), Caesar linked himself to the festival, and Dolabella used the occasion in 46 BC to execute Caesareans on the Tarpeian Rock, removing Caesar’s monument. See Sumi (2005: 119ff.).
2. In the preface to Spencer and Gilbert’s *The Amnia: A Stone-age People* (1927).

10 IMAGINATIVE DISPLACEMENT: CLASSICAL RECEPTION IN THE YOUNG ADULT FICTION OF MARGARET MAHY

1. Various scholars have reflected in passing on the classical elements in novels such as *The Tricksters* and *The Changeover*; but Pohl (2010) is the first sustained examination of Mahy's classicism.
2. Two further novels by Mahy engage with classical myth: *Dangerous Spaces* (1991), a take on the Persephone myth; and *The Other Side of Silence* (1995), which draws on elements of the Philomela myth. They are written for slightly younger readers, and do not form the quartet of major works for young adult readers examined here.
3. The *Our Mythical Childhood Survey* (<http://www.omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey>) tracks the reception of classical material in children's and young adult fiction, and aims to provide a comprehensive picture of this field, which is proving to be a large and fertile area of cultural production.

11 CLASSICAL INFLUENCES IN BERNARD BECKETT'S *GENESIS*, *AUGUST* AND *LULLABY*

1. <http://www.bookcouncil.org.nz/writer/beckett-bernard/>
2. Also: <https://www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/about/news/victoria-partners-for-maori-success>
3. While this saying relates to Socrates, it does not appear in this form in Plato's works.
4. Trans. Shorey (Butler 2002: 14). See Butler (2002: 1–17); Heinaman (2004: 381); White (1988: 402–3); Schiller (1968: 8). On whether Socrates is dealing with 'ordinary justice' or 'Platonic justice', see White (1988: 395–410); Hall (1971: 147–58); and Schiller (1968: 1–14), all of whom react to Sachs (1963). See also, White (1984: 393–421) (with focus on the classifications of goods in the *Republic*). Heinaman (2004: 379–93) posits that Plato's argument that justice pays is a flawed one. Doing one's work is just behaviour, thus philosophers should rule. However, Plato also argues that ruling is an intrinsic evil. Thus, justice does not pay for the rulers. Neither, Heinaman contends, does justice pay for the other classes doing their jobs.
5. See Schäfer (2011: 155–6); also Giffney (2011: 69).
6. The topic of compassion or humanity is influenced by Christian discourse, but was already discussed in antiquity, particularly in Greek tragedies. See Sophocles' *Antigone* 523. As in this play, the question of what to do with a (clinically) dead body is central to *Lullaby*.
7. Thus, it might be better referred to as a 'legend'. However, Beckett himself uses the term 'myth'.
8. The idea of one person sacrificing himself to bring another back from the dead, which is explored in *Lullaby*, is dealt with in the myth of Alcestis, but nowhere in this novel is Alcestis referenced.
9. The theme of mistaken identities reminds one of a comedy of errors, like Plautus' *Brothers Menaechmus*, or a Euripidean tragicomedy, like *Helen* or *Ion*; though here with tragic consequences that remain unresolved by the end of the book.
10. Of course a reference to Aldous Huxley and *Brave New World* (1932; 1994).
11. Only a few lines later, Rene imagines Maggie stretching out in 'the perfect shape to paint on a vase' (47). More prominent than classical allusions in *Lullaby*, however, are references to Aldous Huxley's 1932 novel, *Brave New World*. The discussion of the soul at the end of the novel (2015: 185–6) seems to be more influenced by Christian doctrine than Socratic teachings.

12 DISPLACED PERSONS AND DISPLACED NARRATIVES IN S. D. GENTILL'S *HERO TRILOGY*

1. *Chasing Odysseus* is shaped around the *Odyssey*; *The Blood of Wolves* reworks the *Aeneid*; *Trying War* engages with Apollonius' *Argonautica* and Greek tragedy, particularly Aeschylus' Oresteian trilogy and Euripides' *Medea*.
2. The national importance of 'Belonging' was reflected in its use as an area of study in the NSW HSC English examinations (2009–14). The 'Welcome to Country' and 'Acknowledgement of Country' protocols are used in Australia to open official events and acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander custodians of the land.
3. The total population of Australia in 1950 was a little over 8 million.
4. The 'Bringing Them Home' report tabled in parliament in 1997 was the result of an inquiry by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission into the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. It has led to a number of initiatives, including the investigation of this history being undertaken in collaboration between the (then) Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the National Museum of Australia and the National Library of Australia. See further: 'Forgotten Australians'.
5. Machaon is Agelaus' biological son; Cadmus, Lycon and Hero are brought up as his children. All have Amazon mothers.
6. In Gentill's narrative, the jealous Scamandrios is revealed as the betrayer of Troy 'who told Odysseus how to work the mechanism that opened the gates. Without this knowledge the warriors who were hidden in the horse would have been unable to let in the thousands who laid waste to Troy' (*Trying War*, 33–4). This attention to feasibility is characteristic of Gentill's retelling of ancient myth, which often answers practical questions unanswered in classical texts, such as how the Trojans acquired supplies during Troy's long siege (*Chasing Odysseus*, 3–4).
7. The murderous and unscrupulous Trojan has been killed by Hero.
8. Gentill's Iulus feels rejected by and dislikes his selfish father, and chafes against the constraints of the story told about him in the *Aeneid*.
9. 'Media Release', quoting Sulari Gentill.
10. In the family, the desire for freedom comes into conflict with protective instincts.
11. In 1902, Australia was the first country in the world to give women the right to vote in federal elections and to be elected to parliament on a national basis. New Zealand granted women the right to vote in 1893.
12. The difficulties of the Herdsmen's alliance with the Trojans are cast into relief by the alliance between them and the Cyclopes, with whom they share both kinship and a worldview that refuses overlordship.
13. For example, the rhetoric of independence from Britain was an important feature of the debate concerning the defeated Australian republic referendum of November 1999.
14. <http://www.sularigentill.com/chasing-odysseus/>.
15. See 'Media Kit'.
16. There is much more in this repetitively self-congratulatory vein in Odysseus' speech.
17. Similarly, 'the indifference of the gods suited the Herdsmen' (*The Blood of Wolves*, 31).

18. The memorializing, epic-style story-telling traditions of the Herdsmen are referred to several times in the *Hero Trilogy*, and Gentill's narrative is also marked by its evocation of the tropes of ancient epic. Frequent variations on the theme of rosy-fingered dawn, for example, mark the progress of the trilogy from its hopeful beginnings (*Chasing Odysseus*, 5) to battle-scarred ends (*The Blood of Wolves*, 431).
19. See also the message he scratches into the rock of a cave on the Island of the Sun: 'The sons of Agelaus were here' (*Chasing Odysseus*, 280).
20. In keeping with the conventions of ancient epic, Gentill names her chapters 'books'.
21. Here Gentill also emphasizes the Greeks' excessive sporting interests and comments on the inclusion of lengthy games in ancient epic, which makes no sense to the practical Herdsmen. Gentill's is a satirical Australian voice, 'prepared to interrogate some of [Australia's] most entrenched mythologies, among them the sanctity of male rituals in sport' Bird (2006: 189).
22. Machaon switches the poisoned bowl of pottage for a non-drugged one (*Chasing Odysseus*, 219), so Odysseus' escape is not 'one of the unexplained loose ends in [Gentill's] plot' Miles (2015: 222).
23. Cf. *Od.* 10.274–324.
24. Note the inversion of the Homeric tale, where the detained Odysseus weeps and Hermes really is sent to tell Circe to let him go (*Od.* 5.81–115).
25. At the beginning of the following novel, they are assimilated with the three Fates, spinning the tale of Gentill's young heroes and heroine (*The Blood of Wolves*, 1–3).
26. He reveals for example that he allowed the Herdsmen to take the blame for Troy's fall to revenge himself on Agelaus, who hid from him the Herdsmen's alliance with Troy (*Chasing Odysseus*, 250). Further on the 'radically satiric deconstruction' of Odysseus in Gentill's novel, see Miles (2015: 221–3).
27. He plots to take over his host's kingdom, tries to run off with an unwilling Hero, and falsely claims to have slain the Minotaur (*Trying War*, Books XV–XVIII).
28. Aeneas also connives at the murder of one of his followers (85–95) and appears responsible for the death of Palinarus the helmsman (337, 354–5).
29. Aeneas' interest in Hero's account of meeting Agelaus' shade is stressed earlier (222–3) and it seems possible that his account is 'inspired' by hers.
30. E.g. 48.
31. Compare what Gentill says of her heroes: 'Not one of them was born a Herdsman of Ida, and yet they are truly Herdsmen' ('Media Release').
32. Even the pious Hero comes to feel attracted to an atheist Greek hero introduced in *The Blood of Wolves*.
33. Miles (2015: 223) sees the self-definition of the Herdsmen as 'defenders' as an aspect of the feminine, pacifist, anti-heroic leanings of the series. Note, however, that both Hero and her brothers frequently become enraged (particularly Hero), and all of them fight and sometimes kill their enemies throughout the trilogy, though not without emotional cost.
34. This message is emphasized most strongly in the encounter with Agelaus in the underworld, where it is explained that an interest in violence in life makes for a miserable experience of the afterlife: "Killing the dead is a futile occupation, as is sacking those who no longer have possessions. Men whose only purpose and joy was to kill and conquer are lost in this peaceful realm" (*Chasing Odysseus*, 242–3).

13 PAINTING ANZACS IN AN EPIC LANDSCAPE: GREEK MYTH, THE TROJAN WAR AND SIDNEY NOLAN'S *GALLIPOLI SERIES*

1. The publication was not based on Mackenzie's war diaries and he describes his objective when writing the book as being 'to recapture the spirit in which I passed through a memorable experience' Mackenzie (1929: x).
2. The Australian population at the time was approximately 4.5 million people.
3. The poem was originally written by Arthur Adams and published in the *Bulletin* on 20 May 1915. It was reprinted in *The Anzac Book* in 1916 with one minor alteration and attributed to J. Wareham of the First Australian Field Ambulance. It is not known whether the editor, C. E. W. Bean, was aware of the original publication of the poem by Adams.
4. Johnston (1967: 466) embellishes this thought when writing on the topic two years later: 'From then on, when the retzina circled and wild winter buffeted at the shutters of the waterfront taverns, we would talk far into the small hours about this other myth of our own, so uniquely Australian and yet so close to that much more ancient myth of Homer's. Nolan's poetic imagination saw them as one, saw many things fused into a single poetic truth lying, as the true myth should, outside time.'
5. All images referred to in this chapter can be viewed at: <http://www.awm.gov.au/search/collections/>
6. On the incorporation of classical motifs into Great War commemorative sculpture, see Carden-Coyne (2003: 40–7).
7. Plate 39: *Grande hazaña! Con muertos!* in *Los Desastres de la Guerra* (1810–20).

14 OF HEROES AND HUMANS: MARIAN MAGUIRE'S COLONIZATION OF HERAKLES' MYTHICAL WORLD

1. Readers can view the full print suite at www.marianmaguire.com/2008---the-labours-of-herakles.html
2. This chronology stands despite the fact that some historical events featuring in the *Herakles* series happened, in reality, after the Taranaki Land Wars.
3. Maguire has recently expanded on her understanding of myth creation Maguire (2017: 112–13).
4. While Maguire is happy for curators to change the hanging order, she herself notes these historical opening and closing events Maguire (2017: 114).
5. Unless otherwise noted, quotes from Marian Maguire are taken from conversations with the authors, 2016.
6. Specifically: 'Mount Egmont from the Southwards' (1840) and 'Kauri forest, Wairoa River, Kaipara' (1839).
7. On Sydney Parkinson (c. 1745–71), see Johnson in this volume.
8. A poupou is a carved wall panel found on Māori wharenui (meeting houses) representing the spiritual connection between tribe and ancestors.
9. Our translation from: *Wie begegne ich dem Fremden und was macht diese Begegnung mit meiner eigenen, kulturellen, Identität?*
10. Maguire notes that the plural 'Maoris' was used in the title at the time she sought reproduction rights; however, the word now appears in the singular on the Auckland War Memorial Museum's website.
11. Also see Maguire's explanation of her use of this painting Maguire (2017: 120).

12. Specifically, in ‘Pseudopanax Achilles Penthesilea’ (2001).
13. In Māori tradition, taniwha are supernatural creatures that can be terrifying or can play a protective role (kaitiaki). For more on this tradition, including that of ‘taniwha slayers’, see: <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/taniwha>

15 TEMPORAL TURBULENCE: RECEPTION STUDIES(?) NOW

1. With mixed results, as demonstrated, for example, by the controversy of the episode ‘The Way’, which depicted Hindu deities. For a nuanced reading of the controversy, see Zeiler 2013.
2. Nisbet 2008 is an exception, discussed above.
3. There are, of course, exceptions here. Tom Stevenson highlights *Xena*’s transnational production processes and New Zealand setting (Stevenson 2017), while Anthony Keen explicitly warns Classicists against imposing our disciplinary categories onto pop-cultural productions, which tend to be historically ‘eclectic,’ ‘blur[ring] the distinctions between most forms of the ancient and medieval past’ Keen (2013: 34).
4. For further discussion of the perceived mutual exclusivity of the classical and the local as lenses for understanding New Zealand, see Miles in this volume.
5. These examples were collected by the late *Xena* fan, Ann M. Ciola who taught African art history at SUNY Binghamton: see Ciola (1994). A yipwon is a distinctive art figure from northeast Papua New Guinea.
6. Some of this work has begun to be done in the context of religious studies (Fillingim 2009), although without close attention to the New Zealand context.
7. On the legacy of *Xena* on stunt work in New Zealand and globally – it involved the development of a distinctive stunt style indebted to Hong Kong wuxia movies and known as ‘Kiwi-style wire-fu’ – see Steimer (2009). On the production side and the use of local expertise, see Naismith 2001. *Xena*’s impact on the design scene is visible in the number of contemporary fibre artists, designers and jewellery makers in New Zealand who list *Xena: Warrior Princess* on their CV, including the Māori fibre artist Shona Tawhiao.

16 CLASSICAL EPIC IN PETER JACKSON’S MIDDLE-EARTH TRILOGIES

1. This phrase is what Griffin defines as the subject of Greek epic; it is not intended as a definition of the epic, but is perhaps evocative of what people associate with the epic form.
2. On the relationship between the cinematic epic and the classical epic, see Paul (2013).
3. For more on this, see Parry 2012.
4. This likeability is aided by the casting of popular actor Sean Bean: one of Boromir’s first lines, ‘Still sharp,’ seems designed to slyly remind audiences of Bean’s then-most famous role, Napoleonic War hero Richard Sharpe. Ironically, Bean shortly afterwards went on to portray Odysseus in *Troy* (2004), Wolfgang Petersen’s film adaptation of the *Iliad*.

17 SHIFTING PARADIGMS IN BEN FERRIS’ *PENELOPE*

1. Also, Andrei Tarkovsky, Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Peter Greenaway.

2. Australian production crew include John Barahanos, Director of Photography and Jennie Tate (1947–2007), Production Designer.
3. Haller (2009: 397–417); Vlahos (2007: 107–31); DeSmidt (2006: 284–9); Rozokoki (2001: 1–6); Russo (1982: 4–18).
4. The film's visual narrative, which rarely changes to differentiate between fiction and fantasy, unintentionally mirrors Molly Bloom's thoughts and memories – her stream-of-consciousness – which is stylistically depicted via absence of punctuation and grammar.
5. Their slow, stylized pace is an example of Ferris' interpretation of Noh theatre.
6. Her death-like condition is also likened to the expression *la petite morte* – that state of post-orgasmic unconsciousness.
7. The inclusion of a dog barking in the film's 'Opening' alludes to Actaeon's hounds.
8. For different meanings and interpretations associated with Artemis/Diana, see Miles in this volume.
9. Homer *Odyssey* 11.34–333; 11.385–635; Apollodorus 2.5.12; Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.103–901.
10. *The Penelopiad* also re-considers the theme of gossip from the point of view of Penelope and her maids. Atwood (2005; 2006: 143–52).
11. The 'rounding-up' of Penelope's female servants parallels their submission to Telemachus in preparation for their hanging (Homer *Odyssey* 22.457–60).
12. For an alternative version of the rape of Penelope's maids, see Atwood (2005; 2006: 111–18).
13. Joyce was attracted to Odysseus' story because of his reluctance to go to war, Hall (2008: 46).
14. These figures do not account for the number of men raped, of which no current estimate is available.
15. The Balkan term for Bosnians of the Islamic faith; to a lesser extent, Roman Catholic Croat women were also targeted.
16. Symbolically, the act of rape mimicked the former Turkish custom of impalement and, although the Serbs believed their ancestors received this form of punishment during the Ottoman's reign, the more accepted view is that it was mainly used on Turkish officers who were deemed traitors Boose (2002: 82).
17. Ancient sources also acknowledge the use of rape camps by invading forces, Gaca (2014: 324–31).
18. The level of violence and treatment of women parallels instances in Greece. See Gaca (2011: 85–7; 89; 96–7), including comparisons with female rape victims in Bosnia.
19. Ancient sources describe male defenders killing the women and children of their community rather than allowing them to be 'andrapodized' by enemy forces Gaca (2010: 149–52).

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CHAPTER 1 BLACK OUT: CLASSICIZING INDIGENEITY IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

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